THE CHALLENGES OF THE FEMALE PREACHER IN THE PATRIARCHAL CONTEXT OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

by

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ABSTRACT

THE CHALLENGES OF THE FEMALE PREACHER IN THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

This project interrogates various challenges facing female preachers in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. It highlights the deeply entrenched patriarchal mindsets and attitudes that have developed into a normalized culture that seeks to maintain male dominance in the face of increased numbers of females getting ordained as preachers and engaging in post-graduate educational preparation, which is a requirement for the highest ordination of Itinerant Elder in the church's denomination.

Qualitative research was conducted on thirteen licensed and ordained leading female preachers from the following levels in the AME Church: Bishop, Episcopal Supervisor, General Officer, Presiding Elder, Senior Pastor, and Associate Minister, comprising five generations and nine of the thirteen inland Episcopal Districts, who have experienced sexism, discrimination, and misogyny within the denomination. The Episcopal Districts represented are as follows: 1st Episcopal District (Bermuda, Delaware, New England, New Jersey, New York, Western New York, and Philadelphia); 2nd Episcopal District (Baltimore, Washington, Virginia, North Carolina, and Western North Carolina); 3rd Episcopal District (Pittsburgh-West Virginia, Ohio-South Ohio, and North Ohio); 4th Episcopal District (Indiana, Chicago, Illinois, Michigan, Canada, and India); 5th Episcopal District (California, Southern California, Desert Mountain, Midwest, Missouri, and Pacific Northwest); 6th Episcopal District (Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Atlanta-North, Macon, South Georgia, and Augusta); 10th Episcopal District (Texas, Southwest Texas, North Texas, and Northwest Texas); and the 13th Episcopal District (Kentucky, East Tennessee, West Tennessee, and Tennessee).

In the first stage, each participant received a twenty-question survey with 18 closed-ended and two open-ended questions, and all 13 completed the survey within the designated time frame. Upon completion of the survey, each participant was scheduled for a one-hour video Zoom interview in which questions were expounded upon based on responses to their respective surveys. Twelve women provided Zoom video interviews; one interview was conducted via phone. In the final research stage, an all-participant Zoom forum was scheduled, which nine of the 13 participants attended. During the forum, one-minute introductions were given by each participant, and instructions were provided for discussion items in the two breakout rooms. This project analyzed and reflected on the experiences of each interviewee from a womanist framework. The findings confirmed the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture and structure in the denomination and illuminated the fact that patriarchy and misogyny are not gender specific. The majority of the participants had also experienced patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes from other female clergy and women in the laity.

Each one-on-one Zoom interview took place between May 2023 and July 2023. The culmination group forum took place in August 2023.

Through analysis, key themes emerged as to why so few female leaders held critical positions of power. Those themes included the culture of the AME Church, the fact that men held on to power, and that women were not in leadership positions, thus leading to a vicious cycle of excluding women. Themes also emerged describing these women's sexist experiences. More specifically, respondents recounted experiences of not being addressed by their appropriate clerical titles and being overlooked for serving on key committees and/or appointments. This dissertation concludes with the project's limitations, implications, and future research and direction suggestions.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to Almighty God, Who provided the strength, fortitude, and tenacity to complete this project amid seemingly insurmountable transitions: the death of my mother (January 2022), the death of my father-in-love (November 2022), and my family's unexpected transition to serve at a church in Nashville from Memphis three days after burying my father-in-love! But God!

I am forever grateful to my dearly departed, forever supportive, and encouraging parents, Mr. Curtis Anderson, Sr., and Mrs. Santranella Anderson. Daddy, being an educator, planted the seed for higher learning and a thirst for education. Being the number one cheerleader, Mama received the news of my acceptance to the New York Theological Seminary three months before she passed. I will forever remember her happy tears and excitement for her firstborn child! Thank you both for your love and support and for charting a legacy of decency and integrity!

Last but not least, I dedicate this project to my husband, Byron Moore, and my children, my three C's: Candace, Chloe, and Caleb Moore. Byron has always supported me as a woman in ministry and has believed in the gifts and callings that God has placed in me from day one! Thank you for your unwavering support! I love and appreciate you so very much! We made it on this journey together as the winds were blowing and the rain was pouring, but we kept our eyes on the goal–finishing and graduating! I am thankful to be in marriage, ministry, and life with you–my soul mate! My 3 C's, it's so hard to put into words how much I appreciate who each of you is and how God knew what kind of children to bless us to birth for this unpredictable journey of ministry! Your patience, encouraging words, and support meant more to me than you will ever

know because each of you is wise beyond your years! Thank you, babies. I love and appreciate each of you!

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I am grateful to each of the brilliant, gifted, and gracious participants who allowed me to interview them for this project and will be named in the body of it. Your contributions were priceless, and I could glean from each of you and marvel at the strength and tenacity you possess that blesses you to be who you are.

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Chapter 1: INTRODCTION & BACKGROUND

This chapter will discuss the societal, historical, and biblical contexts, stereotypes, and cultures that have influenced sexism, discrimination, and misogyny towards the female preacher in the Church. It will also discuss the calls of women to ministry in the AME Church and the formation of the Connectional Commission on Women In Ministry.

Introduction and Background

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was incorporated and established as a denomination in 1816. Former enslaved Africans were praying in St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania and were snatched off of their knees in the process. That discriminatory act lit a fire in the founder of African Methodism, Richard Allen, and others, to leave that Methodist body and worship independently as the Free African Society which is now known as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). Although the denomination is noted as the oldest Christian denomination founded by people of African descent and has historically been celebrated for its inclusion of women in the clergy ranks, this chapter will discuss some of the normalization of discrimination that has been operating consistently since the denomination's inception and has been cemented in its fabric. It is ironic at best and hypocritical at least, that the same denomination that began because of discrimination imposed upon its fore parents, is the same that discriminates against female clergy.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church is slow in providing consistent opportunities for qualified clergywomen to be elected or appointed to prominent pastoral charges or connectional leadership roles, such as Bishops, General Officers, Presiding Elders, and Delegates. As inadequate representation is exposed and engaged through the presentation of data that substantiates said claim, we can address the lack of male-to-female parity in leadership positions, by presenting data that shows the disparity in opportunities and appointments for upward matriculation, promotion, and inclusion. Presenting the personal accounts of leading female preachers in the denomination who have endured and overcome sexism, discrimination, and misogyny will be a further validation of the church's cultural perpetuation of sexism and gender bias.. The women in ministry throughout the Connectional Church must be apprised of the statistical data that shows the disparity, which will equip the clergywomen with evidence that will allow them to support a resolution to the General Conference of the African Methodist Church. The submission of a resolution to the Resolutions Committee would afford the General Conference the opportunity of hearing the statistical data on the floor of the General Conference to avoid the deletion of or oversight of legislation that will be presented. "The Resolutions Committee shall write resolutions as directed by the Connectional President or the body." [1] "All resolutions must be in writing and signed by the individual(s) offering them, becoming the property of the General Conference. After twenty-four hours the resolution may be called up. Subject to a direction by the General Conference to the contrary, all resolutions relating to any of the Departments, Divisions, and/or operational procedures of the Connectional African Methodist Episcopal Church shall be referred to the appropriate committee for study and

[1] African Methodist Episcopal Church. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Nashville, TN: Rev. Rodrick D. Belin, 2021), 623.

recommendation." [2] Many pieces of legislation presented to the General Conference do not have an opportunity of being submitted to the floor for a vote because it fails to pass the scrutiny of the Revisions Committee. "The Revisions Committee shall be composed of one(1) clergy and one (1) lay delegate elected from each episcopal district. The duly elected members of the Revisions Committee for each episcopal district shall assemble no more than ten (1) to fourteen (14) days immediately preceding the General Conference. They shall prepare a printed copy of all legislation for each delegate. The packet of legislation shall be posted on the Official African Methodist Episcopal Church website (www.ame-church.com) and sent to the delegations at least thirty (30) days before the General Conference convenes. All bills and proposed legislation must be in the hands of the General Secretary of the AME Church at least ninety (90) days prior to the opening of the General Conference. All bills submitted under the requirements herein shall be submitted as a single bill relative to the subject matter that the bill deals with and signed by the author thereof. This does not limit the presentation of multiple bills from any member or group. However, if the single bill submission requirement is not adhered to the bills(s) as presented will not be considered when attached to bills relating to other subjects. All other bills and proposed pieces of legislation must be referred to the Revisions Committee by action of the General Conference. All adopted legislation shall become effective immediately at the close of the General Conference at which it is passed, unless otherwise specified in the legislation. The General Secretary, in coordination with the Revisions Committee, shall post all adopted legislation on the Official African Methodist Episcopal Church website (www.ame-church.com) within twenty-four (24) hours of the close of the General Conference."[3]

[2] African Methodist Episcopal Church. *The Doctrine and Discipline*, 854.

[3] African Methodist Episcopal Church. *The Doctrine and Discipline*, 271-272.

The silence of the female preacher is not necessarily a complacent voice, but it is a tired voice. Some women are afraid to speak up because they want an opportunity to 'sit at the table' with the men. Some have seemingly lost hope and have decided to lean on their religious cultivation and ideologies that inform them about the necessity of not murmuring and complaining. So, they accept the reality of their situation though unjust, unpleasant, and unfair. The 'seat at the table' is unfortunately a slave mentality that gives the slave a certain amount of pride because they have been invited to 'eat' at the master's table. While interviewing Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake, the Senior Pastor of the Greater Allen Cathedral in New York, was asked if she thought that we as women are guilty of being co-opted sometimes to the good old boy network way of thinking. She responded, "I would say that when your desire, when your primary desire is to be in the good old boy network, then, yes, that can happen. And I've seen it happen. Yes, but I've also seen women, you know, really fight for other women, even though they may be a delegate. They are in there fighting. Yes, to get other women. So, you know, I guess it's a little of both right? And we have to make certain that we understand just because you are allowed in, that as females, you need to make certain that we are reaching back to get someone. And don't be so happy to be at the table that you don't recognize that you are actually on the menu."[4]

As a female preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who was born and raised in this denomination, I would be the first to say I love this Church. I do not have an ax to grind, but an assignment to examine some cultural practices that are not indicative of the liberation that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ embodied and preached. Because we, as the Church, should be promoters of liberation, it is quite ironic that from the foundation of time and

[4] Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake, Cohort Mentor Zoom Interview, Greater Allen Cathedral AME Church, New York, NY.

in the pages of Scripture, women have often been discriminated against simply because of the gender that they were assigned at birth. My context for this paper is two-fold because I have observed these discriminatory practices with other female preachers and also have an experiential lens that allows me to speak from a definitive and non-theoretical perspective.

Biblical Context

The title of the following article immediately captured my attention, "Dare We Speak of Hope? Only If We Speak of Woundedness."[5] It reminded me of Henri Nouwen's book, "The Wounded Healer." Many women in ministry are wounded healers. Both words, wounded and healer, seem like an oxymoron but are filled with theological jewels that all mature Christians will learn to embrace in some season of their Christian journey. How can one speak of hope when a person has been wounded? How is it possible to be a healer when one is wounded? Within this seeming dichotomy lies the mystery of God's power in the substance of things hoped for. When we have been wounded, it is in these moments that hope in a Deliverer begs us to keep moving forward and to press toward that "through" part of the Christian journey, in which we look forward to trouble not always lasting, but getting through our trial, tribulation, and storm. At these points, a conscious decision must be made to not grow weary in well-doing where fainting may have been crouching at your door. Hope gives a faith walker whose hope may be on a fence a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel and allows them to go to sleep believing that

[5] Andrew C. Stout. "Boesak's "Dare We Speak of Hope? Searching for a Language of Life in Faith and Politics." *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 63: Iss. 2, Article 8. 2020

there is a chance that things may get better. The walking by faith and not by sight part of the Christian's journey may not always be preeminent, but hope takes the lead in one's mind, allowing a person to press through anyhow.

This article states, "We must resist the media propaganda that is so quick to categorize our hope as naïve, not of this world, and therefore the attitude of dreamers…." Often the media is motivated by what is seen, and science is similar in its motivations. But it is the awesomeness of God that allows His power to be on full display even in areas of science in which many traditional doctors have noted that statistics indicate that individuals who undergo major surgery have higher success rates of expedient healing when the patient has shown that they engage in a life of prayer and meditation.

The pessimistic outlook that some female preachers may experience should not be judged harshly. Although they/we are called to preach messages of hope and faith, one can be overtaken by the biblical, historical, and denominational norms of discrimination that are very synonymous in all facets. The article warns us against not falling prey to the media's negative propaganda that would try to convince us that our hope is naive. Some may think it is naive for this subject to be broached, which has been the proverbial 'elephant in the room.' Some may feel that it is naive for me to hope for change because the system has been in place for more than two centuries. I dare not only to speak of hope but to embody it, believing that this church and women in ministry cannot fix what we are not willing to face, and we cannot change what we are not willing to confront.

In the Bible, when we review the life of Priscilla and Aquila, we see a husband-and-wife team, a clergy couple, and a dynamic duo whom Paul charges to spread the gospel. When this

couple is first introduced in Acts 18:2-3, Priscilla is introduced by name, which is significant in bible texts. However, she is introduced as having accompanied her husband to Italy from Rome. The shift is interesting in verse #18, where her name is mentioned first, but the text shifts back to her husband's name, Aquila, mentioned first in verse #26. However, when we review Romans 16, there is an introduction of another woman in ministry, Phoebe. Paul introduces her as "a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also." Paul's affirmation of Phoebe as a leader in the church affirms the role that women played in building the New Testament Church, especially that of the Gentiles. Immediately following this introduction of Phoebe, in verse #3, Paul introduces the clergy couple from Acts but mentions Priscilla's name first.

As Dr. Moses Biney indicated in his lecture, "We must remember that what we experience in ethnography in the church, for instance, indicates the attitudes and biases people bring to the organization from their contexts. When we examine the patriarchal attitudes that are present in the church, some of those dispositions emanate from the cultural norms in households, the workplace, politics, sports, and various other venues.[6]

"The reality is while there have certainly been some gains in the past twenty-five years, with the election of female bishops or a handful of millionaire women preachers, there are denominations that deny, rescind, or ghettoize women's ordination. In some cases, women are ordained but not granted opportunities to pastor. Women who "rock the boat" or try to voice

[6] Moses Biney. "Leadership and Mentoring In Diverse Contexts I," May 2022, New York Theological Seminary, New York, NY.

their disdain for the rules and regulations are characterized as castrating, promiscuous, incorrigible, destructive, and confused about their sexuality."[7] This demonization is a deceptive, spiritual warfare tactic to distract the offended person (or woman in this instance) from focusing on the offense, though very legitimate, but to instead focus on the minutiae that is being presented by the distractor. "Be on your guard so that no one deceives you by saying, "Look over here!" or "Look over there!" For the child of true Humanity exists within you. Follow it! Those who search for it will find it. —"[8]

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women were with them, told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." [9] These women were not received for spreading the good news or preaching the gospel. The men did not only not believe them but critiqued them as they were preaching idle tales. One could try to substantiate their response by indicating that the men were grieving, thus the reason for disbelief. Although I do not agree with that perspective, I would accept it. However, potential discrimination is introduced in this text when they label what the women were proclaiming as "idle tales." These women were the first gospel preachers who spread the good news, and as verse number nine states, "They told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest." They not only told the gospel to the apostles/disciples, but they told it to other people. In that crowd, it would be interesting to know if the others believed the women's report

[7] Biney. "Leadership."

[8] Meggan Watterson. *Mary Magdalene Revealed: The First Apostle, Her Feminist Gospel & the Christianity We Haven't Tried Yet, (*Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2019*),* 3-7

[9] Spiros Zodhiates. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, Revised,* (Iowa City, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1991), 10-11.

or if the disbelief of the apostles swayed them. Nonetheless, the women were the last at the grave and the first to report that Jesus had arisen.

> "Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem."[10]

A woman being mentioned by name in the pages of Scripture is noteworthy. This prophetess is mentioned by name, and her father's name, Phanuel, is mentioned once, and the meaning of his name is 'face of God.' The reasonable assumption is that Anna was raised in a Godly household and operated in her God-given calling as a prophetess, to the point that Scripture denotes that she was leading people to redemption by preaching the gospel.

When we review the story of the prophet and judge, Deborah, in the Old Testament of the bible, one can reasonably conclude that through this appointment that, God was foreshadowing what Paul the Apostle reminds us in the New Testament in Galatians 3:28 states, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

The name Deborah means 'bee.' A bee is an insect that makes honey, is busy, and can multitask. Her work suits the meaning of her name. She prophesies, judges, administrates, gives

[10] Spiro Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek*, Luke 2:36-38.

directives, and leads fearlessly. When Barak said that he would not go unless Deborah went with him to Kedesh, she responded and said "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." This appointment was a God appointment and should not be justified or minimized because of sexist ideologies and patriarchy deeply embedded in the universal Christian Church. Commentators and theologians intentionally emphasize that Barak, not Deborah, was commended for his faith in Hebrews 11:32. No real emphasis is illuminated on his initial fear of going into battle. Fear and faith cannot coexist, so maybe it is best described as hesitancy. One commentator exuded sexism and patriarchy in the following quote, "He [God] raised up the "weaker sex" a prophetess named Deborah. It is not the norm for a woman to occupy such a place of spiritual authority, but this was a time of declension. She should not be used as an example of the woman's role in the church today since she is the exception and not the rule. Also, this was Israel, not the church." This quote is a glaring example of how the god of this world has blinded believers, and the darkness often results from preconceived notions of sexism and deeply embedded patriarchy from which the male gender benefits. This male commentator could not accept what God's Word clearly states through the Old Testament prophet, Joel, who said, *And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream, Your young men shall see visions.* Some theologians debate about the timing of the fulfillment of this prophecy and how it is repeated by Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2:17-21. The reality of sons and daughters being included in the prophecy is further validated in the epistle written by Paul the Apostle in Galatians 3:28, which states, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* With these gender equity verses being

espoused in both the Old and New Testaments, as the Body of Christ, we should not try to govern ourselves by any dispensation that is not Holy Spirit-led. God does not choose vessels based on gender but availability to His Spirit. In the interview with Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown, she said, "Prophetic preaching is that we all have something to say."[11]

Societal Impacts Ecclesiastical

The church is often pedestalized, but people must remember that the church is composed of people from society and the world. "In this country, women make 83.7% of what men are paid, and the inequality is even greater for Black and Hispanic women.." [12] The same disparity is comparable in the Church. A former pastor, Rev. T.G., who was not one of the thirteen interviewed, said, "When I went to that church I tried to love them. They told me that I would be receiving pandemic pay and would not receive a full salary." Not even one year after her assignment to the church and that encounter, she quit pastoring altogether.

Society perpetuates the disparity in treatment towards women because any leadership position or well-paying white-collar or blue-collar job was/is reserved for the "person" who is supposed to "wear the pants" in the household. Many of the discriminatory, misogynistic, and sexist societal ideologies never intended for women to lead Fortune 500 companies, own professional sporting teams, be police officers, drive eighteen-wheeler trucks, or be the Vice President of the United States.

[11] Teresa L. Fry Brown. *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help?: Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry*. (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008).
[12] U.S. Department of Labor Blog, "March 14, 2023, The Gender Wage Gap," October 20, 2023, *[blog.dol.gov]*.

The sexism, discrimination, and misogyny are further validated by data that has remained stagnant for the past two decades. “Women’s labor is undervalued. Most of the disparity in women's and men’s pay cannot be explained by measurable differences between them. Out of the causes of the wage gap that we can measure, the main contributor is that women are more likely than men to work in low-paying jobs that offer fewer benefits.”[13] “Education is not enough to eliminate the gender wage gap. On average, women have more years of education and are more likely than men to have completed Associate’s, Bachelor’s, or Master’s degrees. Yet, there is a significant gender wage gap at every level of education. Overall, women must complete one additional degree to be paid the same wages as a man with less education.”[14] “The gender wage gap does not resolve itself as women age and develop further in their careers. The older Black and Hispanic women have the most extreme differences in pay.”[15] The most significant identifiable causes of the gender wage gap are differences in the occupations and industries where women and men are most likely to work. Women are two out of every three full-time workers in occupations that pay less than $30,000 per year, and fewer than 1 in 3 full-time workers in jobs paying an average of $100,000 or more. However, even within the same occupations, women earn less on average than men.[16] Corporations and businesses seem resolute in wanting to maintain a clear delineation between the pay of men and women, which aids in fortifying the patriarchy and supports the structure that was designed for men to thrive. He who has the money, and the position has the power.

[13] U.S. Department of Labor Blog.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

In the African Methodist Episcopal Church, there is a similar resolute ideology of fortification of the guard rails of patriarchy. It is commonplace and expected that female preachers will pastor churches with fewer than fifty members and often be located in rural areas, which, as a result, does not afford them a livable wage. The majority of female preachers in our denomination are bi-vocational because the churches that they pastor cannot afford to support a pastor with a full-time salary that is above the poverty level. Some male pastors are also bi-vocational, but the number of men who pastor full-time and enjoy benefits like tuition reimbursement, housing allowances, insurance, gas allowances, and other benefits far exceeds that of the female pastor in our denomination. Male pastors are also more likely to pastor churches in the inner city or downtown, representing promotion and status in the AME Church. For these reasons, the reverberation of ecstatic exaltations from female preachers across the denomination was intense when my cohort mentor, Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake, was appointed the Senior Pastor of the Greater Allen Cathedral of Jamaica Queens, New York. It represented a part of the glass ceiling being penetrated in the appointment context of the denomination. Dr. Flake is pastoring the church that was considered the hallmark of African Methodism because of the properties acquired, the outreach to the community in which the neighborhood sits, their partnerships with corporations and businesses, the grants that the church was able to develop, the impact of the ministry to people and the lives that have been transformed and so much more.

Many sexist issues have plagued female preachers and spiritual leaders from the foundation of the church and the establishment of the covenant relationship between God and the people that were created in His image. The refutation of some of these sexist ideologies will be magnified by reviewing the leadership and practical success that female preachers and spiritual leaders have garnered historically and presently.

Historical Figures Address Societal Misogyny, Discrimination and Sexism

When one reflects on the Civil Rights Movement, the most prominent figures that come to mind are men—especially Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. However, many women were at the foundation of this movement's formation and the logistics that made it successful. Unfortunately, these instrumental female voices are not as well-known as the male voices because sexist attitudes marginalized their works and voices. These historical figures should be celebrated. They did not abandon the movement because they focused on the overall vision and mission. They endured being overlooked and subjugated to less desirable tasks because they were selfless enough to realize the impact of what they were accomplishing.

"Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and one of three women chosen to be a field director for the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. She discusses her difficulties in this position and notes that gender equality was not a given but had to be fought for: "I often had to struggle around issues related to a woman being a project director. We had to fight for the resources, you know. We had to fight to get a good car because the guys would get first dibs on everything, and that wasn't fair…it was a struggle to be taken seriously by the leadership and your male colleagues." [17]She continues, "One of the things that we often don't talk about, but there was sexual harassment that often happened toward the women. And so, that was one of the things that, you know, I took a stand on, that 'This was not – we're not going to get a consensus on this. There is not going to be sexual harassment of any of the women on this project or any of the women in this

[17] TODAY. "Recognizing The Roles of Women Throughout American History" is an online video clip. YouTube. YouTube March 2022. Web.12 October 2023.

community. And you will be put out if you do it.'[18] Ms. Simmons indicated that "gender equality was not a given,"[19] and the same sentiment is present even in the African Methodist Episcopal Church one-half of a century later.

Mildred Bond Roxborough, a long-time secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, discusses the importance of women leaders in local branches: "Well, actually when you think about women's contributions to the NAACP, without the women we wouldn't have an NAACP. The person who was responsible for generating the organizing meeting was a woman. Of course, ever since then, we've had women in key roles--not in the majority, but in the very key roles that were responsible for the evolution of the NAACP. I think in terms of people like Daisy Lampkin, who was a member of our national board from Pittsburgh, she traveled around the country garnering memberships and helping to organize branches. That was back in the '30s and '40s before it became fashionable or popular for women to travel. You have women who subsequently held positions in the NAACP nationally as program directors and as leaders of various divisions." [20] Ms. Roxborough indicated that "without the women, we wouldn't have an NAACP." [21] As it was with the NAACP, so it is with the Church. Without the women, in this case, women preachers, there would be no African Methodist Episcopal Church, at least not as we know it. The churches that female preachers pastor for extended periods, the sustainability of the church's finances through the faithful giving

[18] TODAY.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

of female congregants, which often make the majority of the congregation's membership rolls, would not exist without the consistent contributions of female clergy and laity alike.

Ruby Nell Scales, who later overcame psychological traumas from the racial violence she witnessed in the movement, encourages us to look beyond the simplistic story of Rosa Parks refusing to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery. As she explains, Parks was a long-time activist who had sought justice for African American women who were frequently assaulted—both verbally and physically-- in their daily lives: "…When we look at Rosa Parks, people often think that she was – she did that because of her civil rights and wanting to sit down on the bus. But she also did that – it was a rebellion of maids, a rebellion of working-class women who were tired of boarding the buses in Montgomery, the public space, and being assaulted and called out of their names and abused by white bus drivers. And that's why that Movement could hold so long. If it had just been merely a protest about riding the bus, it might have shattered. But it went to the very heart of black womanhood, and Black women played a major role in sustaining that movement." [22]

"In 1776, future first lady, Abigail Adams, wrote to her husband John, urging the continental congress to, "remember the ladies." [23] Although women of African descent were not considered in espousing this request, it emphasizes that at the foundation and founding of this country, women were not at the forefront of planning and orchestration.

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[22] Collection Civil Rights History Project. "Women in the Civil Rights Movement" *https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/women-in-the-civil-rights-movement/* Library of Congress.

[23] Ibid.

Ida B. Wells said, "You learn that change does not come without sacrifice or quickly, but it does come. You learn that some fights never end and that you must remain vigilant. The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them."[24] Often, issues do not get addressed when groups have been marginalized because the problem continues to dwell and fester in darkness, and the spirit of complacency and lethargy has taken root. Ms. Wells' proclamation, although stated in the nineteenth century, is a clarion assignment for all women in ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church to embrace and resound in our hearts to not grow weary in well doing.

History of Women's Ministerial Calls in AME Church

The desire to pursue this project is birthed out of my initial observation as a laywoman in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I had always been privy to conversations about the liberality and open-mindedness that characterized the African Methodist Episcopal Church regarding its attitudes toward female clergy in contrast to the other six predominantly African American denominations. As I grew older, observed more deeply, and got called into ministry, I saw that our denomination also had some cultural norms to which people had grown accustomed, but it was nonetheless prejudicial at the minimum.

As a female preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church who was born and raised in this denomination, I would be the first to say I love this Church. I do not have an ax to grind,

[24] Collection Civil Rights History Project. "Women."

but an assignment to examine some cultural practices that do not indicate the liberation that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, embodied and preached.

Although it is the oldest denomination founded by people of African descent and is often noted for its liberal attitude towards women, many of these acknowledgments of callings and ordination were not established as the law of the AME Church until well into the 20th century. In the infancy of its formation, women were met with widespread discrimination regarding calls being acknowledged and ordination. As I review a cliff notes version of the "herstory" that is noted on the Connectional AME/WIM (Women In Ministry) website, it is amazing to see that some of the roots of the discriminatory practices that were prevalent during the mid to latter 19th century are still bearing fruit today.

Jarena Lee was the first preaching woman in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The noted founder of our denomination, Richard Allen, allowed Jarena Lee to preach, and she was licensed but was refused ordination. Men and women petitioned the Church to recognize the call of women to the preaching ministry. In 1844, 1848, and 1852, petitions to the General Conference to license women to preach were rejected, and in 1864, the General Conference rejected a resolution to license women to preach. In 1888, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner's 1885 ordination of Sarah A. Hughes as a Deacon in the North Carolina Annual Conference was overturned by the General Conference (the connectional body that now embodies, but the licensing of women as local preachers was approved though it prohibited them being assigned and defined their role as evangelists. The Church began ordaining women as Local Deacon in

1948 and Local Elder in 1956, but it was not until 1960 that women were ordained to Itinerant orders. [25]

Efforts since then to affirm the role and equality of women in the A.M.E. Church and to address the need for eliminating discrimination and injustices based on gender were initiated at the 1976 General Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, when a position paper written by Rev. Dr. Jacquelyn Grant was presented on the status of women. The female ministers of the A.M.E. Church met to voice their concerns about the lack both of representative participation in the governing process of the Church and of incentives for females to enter A.M.E. ministry.[26]

When a delegation of women took these issues before the 1977 Council of Bishops in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the Council reaffirmed its interest in women's concerns. It supported the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Women in Ministry, which researched the herstory of women in ministry in the A.M.E. Church and compiled information on the location of women across the Connection. During the 1980-84 Quadrennium, the Committee began working with the Bishops to have Coordinators appointed to represent the female clergy in their Episcopal Districts.[27]

During the 1984-88 Quadrennium, the drafting of Bylaws for AME/WIM was initiated. The General Board, at its 1989 meeting in Houston, Texas, voted to establish a 19-member Commission on Women in Ministry. In 1992 at Orlando, Florida, the 44th Session of the General

[25] AME/WIM. "The Herstory of AMEWIM," February 4, 2022, www.amewim.org/our-herstory.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

Conference took the herstoric step of adopting a resolution establishing the Commission on Women in Ministry as a Standing Committee of the General Board responsible for overseeing the Connectional AME/WIM. It approved the Connectional President of Women in Ministry to be seated as an ex-officio member of the General Board. It also accepted the By-laws governing and empowering the organization to meet and further its objectives which, as listed below, reflect the revisions proposed for submission to and approval by the General Conference in 2016: [28]

1. To recognize and support women in ministry as an integral part of the AME Church.

2. To raise the consciousness of the AME Church on women's issues.

3. To address the issue of sexism in the AME Church.

4. To work to expand leadership opportunities for women in ministry in leadership in the AME Church.

5. To support women in the pastoral ministry.

6. To affirm specialized ministries including but not limited to chaplaincy, writing, teaching, counseling, research, prison, youth, geriatric, singles, street, health care, family/life relations, music, homeless, HIV/AIDS, and religious education ministries.

7. To encourage academic training for the ministry.

[28] AME/WIM. "The Herstory."

8. To sponsor an International conference at least once during each quadrennial.

9. To support and provide assistance and outreach to women in ministry in the Fourteenth through Twentieth Episcopal Districts. (these are overseas Districts inclusive of the continent of Africa, the Caribbean Islands, India, and France)

10. To compile a complete and accurate record of all women in ministry in the AME church

11. To foster and develop relationships with people and entities that will assist in furthering the objectives described herein." [29]

Admittedly, my heart sank when I perused the list above of revised objectives submitted for approval at the bicentennial celebration of the AME denomination in 2016. The reasonable conclusion is that the Connectional WIM Executive Board chose low-hanging fruit to ensure that these objectives would be considered for legislation. A more sobering reality is if this is what was submitted in the twenty-first century, in the second decade, it emphasizes how deeply embedded the culture of patriarchy, misogyny, and sexism is. The objectives express a similar sentiment that Black folks expressed during the sixties. The orchestraters of the movement did not ask for Black rights, they requested Civil Rights. These objectives listed by the Connectional Women In Ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church exude a similar desire for Civil Rights within our denomination.

The requests and acknowledgments that AMEWIM is requesting are not aggressive, overreaching, or combative, adjectives that have unfortunately been used towards women

[29] AME/WIM. "The Herstory."

when an assertive stance for mistreatment is taken. These are legitimate civil rights requests that any called person should be afforded in the institution called the church, which at its core should magnify and emanate liberation. These eleven proposed revisions were submitted at the bicentennial celebration and the AME Church General Conference. So, after two hundred years of incorporation and two hundred twenty-nine years of being established, we, the spiritual daughters of Jarena Lee, are still fighting some of the demons of discrimination she faced in the 19th century.

In my previous local church context, in a church that is one hundred fifty-seven years old, there has never been a female Senior Pastor in its history. Thirty-three years ago, a female was assigned as the Interim Pastor, in which she could maintain the daily operation of the church until the hierarchy determined a suitable male to be appointed as Senior Pastor. Less than one year later, a male from Nashville was appointed as the Senior Pastor. His wife accepted her call to the ministry and was the first pastor's wife who was ordained clergy. She endured much criticism about being too aggressive, impolite, and bossy. Although she was given an appointment by the Bishop as the Co-Pastor, she was often treated as a staff minister, never chairing or presiding at board meetings, and rarely taught bible studies or preached.

I was only the second pastor's wife who was also a part of the clergy at this local church. Because my husband knows the nature of my call, he stated to the congregation upfront that I am not the Executive Pastor or have the authority I have because I am his wife. He indicated to the church that my gifts have made room for me. At the beginning of our tenure at our previous pastoral assignment, some testing was consistently propelled at me when I preached, taught bible study, presided over meetings, discussed finances with the CFO, negotiated contracts for the church, etc. Although I was clergy, some would have been more

comfortable with me being a traditional first lady. One time during the second year of pastoring the church, I was led to sing a song before preaching. After the service, the Minister of Music came to me and suggested songs that I could lead in the choir. I had to politely decline his request because he was speaking out of his context as a brother who was raised in another denomination that does not usually recognize that women are called to preach.

In the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a preacher endures a four-year ministerial training process before being considered for candidacy as an ordained elder in the denomination. The demographic shift in the board of examiners (the training process for preachers) is alarming to the patriarchal culture and structure of the Church. Many boards of examiners in the United States are 80% to 90% female and it is common for the hierarchy to show preferential treatment to the lone male or the minuscule number of men in the class. The male candidates are often encouraged to be diligent to complete the process and receive a pastoral appointment. This past year, something remarkable happened with preachers on the ministerial staff at the church where I served with my husband as Executive Pastor and Senior Pastor, respectively. Five candidates had completed the first two years of the Board of Examiners process that afforded them their first ordination as a deacon. Four of the five candidates were female. The lone male rejected being ordained because he still needed to complete his undergraduate degree, which is the requirement for itinerant orders as opposed to local orders. In our denomination, the local preacher is assigned to the church out of which they accepted their calling and are not customarily assigned to the pastor. The itinerant preacher has indicated they are available to travel to other locations and pastor a church. The male candidate knows that he desires to pastor, but that requires an undergraduate degree for itinerant orders to pastor a church. When he rejected the idea of local orders, the patriarchal

system tried desperately to convince him to accept the local ordination, and they were targeting him for assignment to pastor a church. None of the female candidates from our church were offered the same opportunity. The male candidate did the unthinkable from a cultural perspective. He rejected the system that promotes men over women and decided to take the legitimate high road and not bow to the patriarchal system that so often favors men. His four colleagues in ministry are ordained and have the title of Reverend. He is still a Brother, and I will forever respect the integrity, sacrifice, and righteous stance that this young man adamantly proclaimed.

Five Consecrated and Elected Bishops

In the 207-year history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, only five Women In Ministry have been elected and consecrated as Bishops of the church. All of these Bishops have been elected in the twenty-first century. Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie was the first elected and consecrated female Bishop in 2000. Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry was the second elected and consecrated female Bishop in 2004. Bishop Sarah Francis Davis was the third elected and consecrated female Bishop in 2004. Bishop E. Anne Henning Byfield was the fourth elected and consecrated female Bishop in 2016. Bishop Francine Brookins was the fifth elected and consecrated female preacher in 2021.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church led the way in Black mainline denominations by electing its first female Bishop, Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, in 2000 at the General Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio. Bishop McKenzie is also the first female Bishop of Methodist denominations.

Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry is the first female Presiding Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She ran in 2000, when Bishop McKenzie was elected, but fell short of election. She ran successfully in the subsequent Quadrennial and was elected a Bishop in 2004.

Bishop Sarah Francis Davis was also elected a Bishop in 2004. She was extremely successful in corporate America, having served as District Manager at Southwestern Bell, and she used that acumen to build in her episcopal assignment to the 16th Episcopal District, which comprises South America, the Windward Islands, the Caribbean Islands, Dominican Republic, and Europe. Bishop Davis passed in 2013.

Bishop E. Anne Henning Byfield was elected in 2016. Her election was historic because, for the first time in the AME Church, she was the first person elected who also had a sibling on the Bench of Bishops, Bishop C. Garnett Henning.

Bishop Francine Brookins is the most recent woman elected to the Bench of Bishops in 2021. She is the only female Bishop with the unenviable opportunity and task of pastoring in a global pandemic, and she is the first female attorney elected as Bishop.

After the turn of the century, when our first female Bishop was elected and two more female preachers were elected Bishops in 2004, the challenge for the church was to engage in the normalization of women being elected to the office of Bishop. Two women elected in 2004 may have caused some concerns in the church's patriarchy. Instead of embracing the election of qualified female preachers to the episcopacy, in consecutive quadrennials in 2008 and 2012, no females were elected to the Episcopacy. After the female election drought in 2008 and 2012, in the next two quadrennials in 2016 and 2021, females were elected to the episcopacy.

The next General Conference will be held in August 2024 in Columbus, Ohio, and we expect that at least one female preacher will be elected during that Quadrennial session.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. Chapters two through five are described below.

Chapter 2: The Profile of the Activist, Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the chapter and transitions into the student (myself, Sharon Moore), providing a one-paragraph summary of the background relationship with the activist. The remainder of the chapter is the biography of the activist, the history of the church she pastors, the legacy of African Methodism and Richard Allen, the founder of the denomination; a synopsis of Dr. Elaine Flake and her husband, Dr. Floyd Flake's clergy couple ministry; and then the chapter culminates with my one-on-one interview with Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake.

Chapter 3:Methods

This chapter begins with a very brief description of the chapter. The remainder of the chapter will provide the survey administered to each participant, the recruitment process, background information, and abbreviated biographies of each participant.

Chapter 4: Findings on a Gender Power Play

This chapter will discuss the use of power in the hierarchy of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to maintain its present patriarchal culture. Information will be presented from each of the Episcopal Districts of the denomination substantiating discriminatory practices, and statistical data will be noted to highlight the disparity in leadership opportunities for women in ministry in the AME Church.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This chapter will provide an initial summary. Following that, the limitations, implications, ministerial competencies, future research, and appendices shall be listed.

Chapter 2: PROFILE OF ACTIVIST REV. ELAINE M. FLAKE

This chapter is extensive. Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake is scheduled to retire in April 2024, and she will have served 48 years at the Greater Allen Cathedral of New York. This ministry of almost one-half of a century is being documented in six different categories, culminating with the recorded Zoom interview at the end of this chapter.

Background Relationship with an Activist

I knew Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake's identity before she was assigned as my cohort mentor and activist. She and her husband's reputation was well known in African Methodism because, for many years, they pastored the leading church in the entire African Methodist Episcopal denomination. Their cutting-edge approach to ministry was new, relevant, community-focused, and transformative, and many ministries in African Methodism and across denominational lines studied and duplicated the model of ministry they adopted. I also became better acquainted with Dr. Elaine Flake's ministry when she was a regular conference speaker during the annual Women's Ministry Convocation experiences at my home church, Oak Grove AME Church in Detroit, Michigan.

Rev. Dr. Elaine M Flake's Biography

Long recognized as a powerful preacher, teacher, and role model with a gift for reaching worshippers of all ages, the Reverend Margaret Elaine M. Flake has been affecting the many lives she touches at The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral in New York City, where she served as co-pastor with the Reverend Floyd H. Flake until May 2020. Upon the retirement of Dr. Floyd Flake, she received an appointment as Senior Pastor. She continues to dedicate her life to the betterment of others by leading in Christian education, evangelistic, and outreach ministries.

Fondly called "Reverend Elaine" by the GAC congregation, she and her husband founded the Allen Christian School in 1982, according to the greater Allen AME Cathedral's website. She was also instrumental in developing the Allen Women's Resource Center, which houses women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Since 1983, she has served as Advisor to the Missionary Department and many other ministries at Allen. She proudly serves as Advisor/Coordinator of the Allen Women's Ministry Department, and each year, over 1,000 women from across the country and the Caribbean attend the retreats she hosts. Reverend Elaine has played a crucial role in increasing the membership of The Greater Allen A.M.E Cathedral to over 15,000. She mentors many leaders in the New York City area and is frequently invited to speak nationwide. [30]

Dr. Flake is the author of the popular book *God In Her Midst: Preaching Healing to Hurting Women* and has contributed to *The Women of Color Study Bible* and *Souls of My Sisters: Black Women Break Their Silence, Tell Their Stories, and Heal Their Spirits*. She and her husband, the Reverend Dr. Floyd H. Flake, authored two books, *Practical Virtues: Everyday*

[30] Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York, 2023, https://www.allencathedral.org/.

Values and Devotions for African American Families Learning to Live With All Our Souls, published by HarperCollins (2003), and *African American Church Management Handbook*, published by Judson Press (2005).

A native of Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. Flake earned her Bachelor of Arts in English from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. She received a Master of Arts in English from Boston University and a Master of Divinity Degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She was awarded the Doctor of Ministry Degree from the United Theological Seminary of Dayton, Ohio. She serves on several community boards and has received numerous citations and awards throughout her years of service. She is a recipient of Union Seminary's Distinguished Alumni Award, and in March 2017, she was inducted onto Morehouse College's "Martin Luther King, Jr. Board of Preachers." [31] She is also a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated; The Links, Incorporated; and the National Council of Negro Women. She currently serves as the National Chaplain of the Links, Inc.

Married for more than 47 years to Dr. Floyd Flake, they are the parents of four adult children: Aliya, Nailah, Robert Rasheed, and Harold Hasan. She has one granddaughter, Nia Renee. [32]

[31] Greater Allen.

[32] Ibid.

The History of Greater Allen Cathedral

The Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church's history is to tell its people's story. In 1834, there were just a few people, but they were filled with the vision to lay the spiritual foundation for a church in Jamaica, New York. Initially they met and prayed, moving from house to house. In the early 1840s, when much of the nation was choosing sides in the abolitionists' debates regarding the enslavement of Black people, a place of worship was built in a very rural part of Jamaica (Washington and South Streets, now 160th Street and South Road), Street and South Road). The original tower, an 18x30 foot structure, was constructed in 1842 and called Allen. [33]

Very little information is available relating to the church that existed throughout the Civil War era. Much of what has been discovered was taken from a few handwritten documents of unknown authorship. An excerpt of a note from an unidentified trustee alludes to the fact that the original church structure was enlarged in 1869. That facility occupied 30x40 feet of space. The Rev. W. Davis was the first pastor, and the Rev. Henson Davis was the pastor when the second structure was built. “What can be determined, however, is that the community of faith called Allen stood its ground through the turbulence of the North/South struggle,” notes the church’s website. [34]

At the turn of the century, the membership of Allen grew quite quickly. The Rev. Joseph Stiles was named as pastor in 1900. The Senior Choir, Stewardess Board, Usher Board, Board of Trustees, and the Willing Workers auxiliaries were organized during his tenure. A small home

[33] Greater Allen.

[34] Ibid.

organ was purchased to further enhance the quality of music during worship services. Shortly after that, again due to the growing congregation, a hand pump organ was installed in the rear of the sanctuary. [35]

During the post-Depression and pre-World War II years, Allen experienced a revitalizing surge in the Sunday School Department. More emphasis was placed on worship and programming for youth. This gave rise in 1933 to founding the Children's Youth Choir, sponsoring Girls and Boys Day, and many athletic activities.[36]

In 1944, the Allen Church suffered a devastating fire that destroyed the sanctuary. The congregation raised the necessary funds needed to rebuild the church. The Rev. William McKinley Dawkins led the congregation during this period of rebuilding. [37]

In the 1950's, Allen continued to grow and prosper in ministry and outreach. The Rev. Emmer Henri Booker led the congregation in its purchase of land on the corner of Merrick Boulevard and Sayres Avenue, and in 1964, the Rev. Donald G. Ming shepherded the membership as construction began for the new edifice. The new building was completed in April 1968. Approximately one year later, the newly constructed church was firebombed, causing considerable damage. The Allen Family went forth again and soon reestablished the sanctuary's beauty.[38]

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[35] Greater Allen.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

The Allen Family and its leaders once again made great strides during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The membership increased to 1,200, and the church increased its influence and impact on the community. Seeing the need to address the welfare of the senior citizen population, in 1974, the Rev. Ming spearheaded the founding of the Allen Community Senior Citizens Center, Inc. and laid the groundwork for a building project that would provide safe and comfortable housing for the community's seniors. In July of 1976, during the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Rev. Ming was elected to the office of Bishop.[39]

July of 1976 also marked when 31-year-old Rev. Floyd Harold Flake became the 35th pastor of the Allen A.M.E. Church. Rev. Flake, who also served as the Congressman of the Sixth Congressional District, along with his partner in life and ministry, the Rev. Margaret Elaine McCollins Flake, has led the church in attaining heights previously thought impossible in light of the socioeconomic challenges of the 80s and 90s. Pastor Flake continued with new fervor and unfailing commitment to God, the legacy of our Founder, Richard Allen. Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church has become known across the country as a most vibrant example of God's people addressing the needs of those around them.[40]

The Black church has historically been the focal point of the Black community, most often being the articulator of the Black experience. As Rev. Floyd Flake states, "The success of the church is vitally connected to what is transpiring within the community it serves."[41]

[39] Greater Allen.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

"More than 60+ clubs and organizations function cooperatively to manifest the truth of the phrase "The Allen Family," states the church's website. In addition to the internal programs and systems that touch the lives of Allen men, women, and children, the outreach is extended through additional avenues, such as a street ministry, Prison Ministry, Cancer Support, An Ear to Hear (ministry to people affected by HIV/AIDS), and the Spiritual Life Counseling Ministry.[42]

"Without a doubt, the Allen of today would not exist without the foundational labors and works of the divinely inspired leaders of the past," states the church's website. "Praises ring out from the people of Allen for the richness of that past. The legacies of their hard work and trust in God will forever linger."[43]

Legacy of African Methodism & Richard Allen

In 1787, African American worshippers at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia were pulled from their knees during prayer by white worshippers. Richard Allen, one of the African Americans, asked that they be allowed to finish prayer, and they then would leave. Prayer ended before the commotion did, and Allen led the African Americans out of St. George's Methodist Church and shortly founded a church that became the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The new congregation worshipped in a blacksmith's shop that Allen purchased with his money. Allen, who later became Bishop Richard Allen, preached in the blacksmith's shop, with an anvil as his pulpit and a doctrine of self-help.

[42] Greater Allen.

[43] Ibid.

Today, the legacy of Richard Allen continues in the Reverend Floyd H. Flake as he pastors this church named for the founder: The Greater Allen Cathedral of New York.

Founded in 1834, the Greater Allen Cathedral of New York demonstrates a strong commitment to God and its parishioners. Pastor Floyd H. Flake and Co-Pastor Elaine M. Flake have led the congregation to unparalleled heights through Christian education, basic education, economic empowerment, and political and social action.

About The Flakes

The Reverend Dr. Floyd H. Flake is the senior pastor of The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York. The congregation has more than 23,000 members, making it one of the nation's foremost Christian churches in the United States. The church is listed among the top twenty churches in America in *Outreach Magazine*'s Annual Survey. The church also owns expansive commercial and residential developments, a private pre-school founded by Flake and his wife, the Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake, and various commercial and social enterprises which have placed it among the nation's most productive religious and urban development institutions.

The church is one of the Borough of Queen's largest private-sector employers. The Greater Allen Cathedral's operations have been a national paradigm of church-centered, faith-based, public/private community educational and economic development. Further, Allen's administrative structure, efficiency, and development efforts have increasingly attracted international and national recognition in print and electronic media. The church has one of the largest outreach ministries in New York City through its Soup Kitchen and Feeding Program,

which distributes over 105,000 meals and pantry bags weekly. The Soup Kitchen distributes more than 10,000 meals alone during Thanksgiving.

Under Rev. Floyd Flake's leadership and faithful to its Christian doctrine of self-help and communal responsibility, Allen Church has provided resources and guidance for innumerable faith-based and secular institutions.

Interview With The Activist

Sharon Moore:

Amen; we are with Reverend Dr. Elane Flake, my cohort advisor and mentor for this project, and we are getting ready to transition into her expounding on some of her responses to the survey. First of all, Dr. Elaine, thank you so much for your transparency and for being a trailblazer in African Methodism. And I will say that she has already been trailblazing before becoming the Senior Pastor of the Greater Allen Cathedral AME Church. But she is still trailblazing, so we thank her for her contributions and transparency. I asked every respondent and participant the same question, and I started off by saying, "Hey, if you answer yes to #1, please proceed. If not, you could stop right there." The one question that I asked at the top was, Do you believe the AME Church has been complicit in condoning sexism, discrimination, or misogyny? You answered in the affirmative. Can you please expound on this? Why did you respond in that matter, ma'am?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Oh, for a number of reasons. Many times, women's voices are not heard. There is a tendency, subtle or overt, for men to be treated with a little more respect. I honestly feel that sometimes women are given the charges the men don't want, you know. Now let me explain what I think. There is more consideration given to me because they see me as the primary breadwinner. And so, I feel that even on the local church level. Brenda Little said to me, and she's not an AME, but she said that her leadership said to her, "When we are looking at pay, you are married."

Sharon Moore:

So, were they actually saying that they don't need to pay you as much because you've got a husband?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Okay, very subtly. If there is a man who may be married well, he may even be married to an attorney, a doctor, or an educator, or whatever, but if he is a family man, they look at him differently.

Sharon Moore:

Yes, yes... I'm going to push you a little bit on your response. And I appreciate the way that you fashioned your response. But you started by saying how there are charges that men don't necessarily want. Do you think there are any cultural biases that will lend themselves to men sometimes having preferential treatment when considering pastoral appointments?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Well, okay. So, I'm not going to say they don't give them in some outlying appointments, but they are more inclined to come after them. You know, they served there a couple of years, but they're looking to promote them, whereas, with some women, they just stay in those churches year after year after year, and I see them putting some very capable women into those smaller charges. But all of them have their secular jobs. I advise everybody to keep their job until you know they have put you somewhere that you can afford for you to quit. But yeah, there is a little favoritism there.

Sharon Moore:

Yes, yes, it is. It's interesting. Most female pastors are bi-vocational, so your point is very well taken. Yes, ma'am. When I asked, “Have you ever witnessed less qualified male preachers obtaining opportunities for positions that could have been afforded more qualified female preachers?” you responded yes. Would you please expound on that?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Well, relationships, the good ole boy network, and maybe longevity. I see that coming into play quite often, especially when it comes to things like the election of delegates. A woman is performing better. But, if we're going to equate, or if we're going to use criteria such as budget being paid based on the number of members and the performance of the church. I don't know what criteria should be used for the election of delegates. But I've just seen that time and time again that there are people who have performed better and there seems to be a kind of criteria that doesn't appear to be fair. Even with the pastoral appointments. I've seen situations where the man got in trouble where he was, but the church moved him. And it seems as if the moves certainly don't hurt them. Even if they've taken money, had moral indiscretions, or whatever, I've just seen it where they take care of the guy. Yes, ma'am, you said it appropriately when you said the good old boy network.

Sharon Moore:

Oh, yeah. So, I asked you if you have experienced the unfavorable attitudes of a man or men towards you, and you said yes. Do you have any examples of that, Dr. Flake?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

When I came to the ministry and became the pastor at Allen, there was a lot of shade thrown. A number of people asking, “What are you going to do if your husband, the Bishop, tries to send you to a church where your husband's not the pastor?” Do you know those silly questions? And

then I heard them say things like when I did get the appointment. I wouldn't hold it together. "She can't hold it together," that kind of thing. And then, it goes back to not being heard. You know you. You can have opinions, you can say things, and they just kind of gloss over it. That kind of thing. So nothing blatant, because I came along at a time when I entered ministry for what was probably the leading pastor in the district, so you know they won't mess with me-- too much, but yeah, a little. A few loose sexist remarks here and there. I'll never forget, one Bishop said to me, "Why would you be going into ministry? You are not totally like the rest of them, you know."

Sharon D. Moore:

Have you had to address anybody directly about how they were treating you?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Not really. I'm feeling that right now. Yes, I have addressed it. Yeah, I'm feeling that the way I'm being treated on this whole succession issue. Floyd would not have been getting the same treatment.

Sharon Moore:

I will say this, and I say it in my prayer, and I'm repeating it to you, and I know I'm singing to the choir. You are still trailblazing. You were trailblazing 40 years ago when you started the

awesome Women's Retreat that you did at Greater Allen Cathedral. Also, when you had your Allen school. At the time you started Allen school, that was not something that was popular in African Methodism. So, you were trailblazing four decades ago and you are still trailblazing. And so, we know, heavy is the head that wears the crown!

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Pray for me.

Sharon Moore:

Yes, ma'am. Oh, I do that. Trust me. But I'm going to say this to you. The fact that you were assigned to me as my cohort advisor, it's divinely ordered that you were assigned to me. Throughout this project, you are speaking, and your voice will echo in the decades to come. Thank you, Jesus, and people will be able to look at what this trailblazing woman did and be able to glean from you. So, I want to thank you personally. Thank you. Yes, ma'am, I just wanted to say that. Now, I'm shifting the conversation a little bit. I asked on the survey if you experienced discrimination or mistreatment from other females in the AME Church. You responded affirmatively. Can you expound on that?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Well, obviously, there are women in our congregation in particular, who do not identify with females. They're women who would say they didn't do anything with the Women's Ministry.

They were tied to Floyd. And, of course, when he made the bold move to say, “Co-Pastor,” there were women who were more AME die-hards. They would say things and maybe they didn't consider it discrimination. They'd say things like what the discipline doesn't call for, and I don't have but one pastor. You know that kind of thing. But all in all, you can't let their attitudes overrule or overshadow the positive responses. But I have added that kind of experience with women in the congregation now, in terms of women in the ministry. Let me think really hard because some of the older women in the ministry were very affirming. There are some women who enjoyed being the only woman in the room. Yeah, so, there's a little of that, I think, but it's so subtle.

Sharon Moore:

Are there some women who are happy that they've had that opportunity to be the only one in the room or at the table, that they are afraid to help out another sister because that rhetoric is, or that cultural norm is, there can only be one? So, we have rhetoric like this. And like you said, it's subtle, but it's a part of the culture. Okay, well, we need one female delegate. Why does it only have to be one? Okay? And then, we can say things like this, even for people running for Bishop. Now, you know the church is not going to let more than one woman get elected. You know. Let me ask you this, Dr. Flake, do you think that we are guilty as women, of being co-opted sometimes to the good old boy network way of thinking?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

I would say that when your primary desire is to be in the good old boy network, then, yeah, that can happen. And I've seen it happen. Yes, but I've also seen women really fight for other women, even though they may be a delegate. They are in there fighting to get other women. So, I guess it's a little of both, right? And we have to make certain that we understand, just because you are allowed in, that as females, we need to make certain that we're reaching back to get someone. And don't be so happy to be at the table that you don't recognize that you are actually on the menu.

Sharon Moore:

I asked if you ever felt intimidated by any of your male colleagues? And you answered in the affirmative. Can you please explain how you felt intimidated by the unfavorable attitudes of men towards you?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

You want to feel that your experience, and your voice, and your intellect, and your spirituality matter. And in some conversations, and in some instances I have, I feel that that has been overlooked. People will say things to me that I don't think they would say to another man. But then they also will say to other men what they want to say to me. I have a certain level of boundaries, and I think people have figured that out. They tread carefully in some instances. But

I also really do feel that there is a level of treatment that women get unless they start acting a fool. I've never been one to have a chip on my shoulder. I've always wanted to look at things from the total picture. And I didn't want to call something sexist when it was something else. Okay? And so, I have been trying to look at things carefully. For example, let's talk about the election of delegates. What's more important, having one female or going by the ranking? So, this one here is raising this kind of money, paying this kind of budget, and he or she has got so many more new members and blah blah blah. On the other hand, in one of the outlying churches, is it fair to bump the better performing pastor for the female? I know that those are the kinds of questions and the moral issues that we have to contend with. Why, we may have a cause or an agenda, you want to keep it fair, and you want to keep it real. And I would not want to be a delegate if it was just because I'm a woman. I want to be a delegate because that is what you want to call it. I don't see why anybody would like to get a thing like that. But, you know that's what they want. It's cultural status. People fight to get to that delegate by any means they do. And it has to be there and leave it a no man.

Sharon Moore:

Yes, ma'am, I'll say this, having served at the last general Conference as a first alternative, I know what you mean. I didn't want to do it. And I'm just going to be transparent. My presiding elder came to me one-on-one and said, Are you going to run for delegate? I said, No, ma'am Elder. No, ma'am, I said, I'm not splitting the vote. I said, I'm an itinerant elder, but my husband is running for delegate. I'm not trying to split any votes. She said, Okay, well, I really wish that you would reconsider it. So, I thought it was very interesting. So then, when we were hosting the

annual conference leading into the General Conference, Bishop Leath came to me and asked, “Are you going to run for delegate?” So, you know my antennas went up. I said, “No, no, Sir Bishop.” He asked me this in front of Byron. and I said, No, I'm not trying to split the votes with my husband. He said, “Yeah, I hear what you’re saying. But I think it would be good.” So I'm looking at my husband. I said, “Bishop, I'm not comfortable with that, sir.” He said, “Well, at least run as an alternate. Will you do that?” I looked at my husband, and we got this nonverbal thing. And I said, “Okay, Bishop, if my bishop is asking me, I'll run for alternate. But I'm not confident about running for that.” And then he said, “Yeah, I think it would be interesting.”

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

That sounds just like him, girl. You! You got him down.

Sharon Moore:

But on a very serious note, I think that people need to read the legislation. You know I'm reading the legislation and knowing the stuff, and people are sitting up there eating snacks and not going over the legislation. They're not taking it seriously. So, you're right, being there from 8 to 8. That's no fun. So, I agree with you on that. So, you've never been a delegate to the General Conference? Have you been approached about being a delegate to the 2024 General Conference?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Well, I can't, because I have to come out. But I was approached last time because it was pretty clear I couldn't go, and they knew that.

Sharon Moore:

Oh, all right. Well, I asked you about the culture, and I said the layman's definition was the understood way of doing things in the AME Church. I ask you, was it a good one? You said no and let me just say you were in good company. Why do you think the culture of the AME Church is not a good one?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Oh, girl, you got all day?

Sharon Moore:

Yes, ma'am, as long as you have time, I'll make the time. Yes, ma'am.

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Are you talking about sexism?

Sharon Moore:

Just in general. The question was, do you feel the culture, the understood way of doing things of the AME Church, is a good one? So, in general, it includes sexism, discrimination, and misogyny, but generally, the culture.

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Well, that is our way of making appointments, and the way we do things. I hear one day you're here and on the next there's someone else, and there's no closure. There's no goodbye. There's no nothing. I think that's emotionally violent. I think that sometimes people are rewarded for their mediocrity, their longevity in spite of their mediocrity. I think that our system is not good, because it appears that bishops are not accountable to anyone. That's not good. So, what's this? You can run amuck in the district, and there's no one to pull his coat tail. There's no one to break him in or her.

Sharon Moore:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

System. And I think that the Senior Bishop matters. We've heard stories about bishops going in and being spiteful because they heard that so-and-so did not vote for him to come to the district. Yeah, that kind of foolishness because our Bishops are not accountable to anyone.

Sharon Moore:

The only time they become accountable is at the General Conference, which is every four years. That's the most accountable, if we can call it that. That is when the bishops have to come before the Episcopal Committee. That's true, that's true. That's good. That's good. I want to thank you for that and your transparency. And you're absolutely correct. We talk about being Episcopal governed and are slipping into congregationalism. I asked if more female preachers are needed in leadership positions in the AME Church. Tell me, ma'am, why do you think we need more female preachers in leadership in the AME Church?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

You know. And this is stereotyping to some degree. I think that. And even that's okay. So, I think many men want to pull rank. I think women won't. The congregation might say, Oh, now you got oh, you do that! That's good. You got it fine on that. That's a jewel, please. Well, I think for the brothers, it's all about who I am, what you know, how I am viewed, how much money I can make. You know that kind of thing. And, I just say, women really want to make a difference.

In my mind, that's certainly not to say that no man and that's not to say that all women do. But I think, from a general perspective.

Sharon Moore:

We are about to wrap this up, Rev. Elaine. But there is one other thing, a couple of other things I want to ask you, and I love your short, concise, and sweet responses. I'll remind you of what you said, and you can let me know if you want to expound. I asked this question, I said, five women in ministry have been elected and consecrated as bishops in the two hundred seven-year history of the AME Church. Why do you think there have only been five elected and consecrated, female Bishops? And I can refresh you on your response. Your response was because often women are not appointed to churches that will be considered “seats of bishops.”

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Well. You know. And you talk about church culture. Yes, ma'am. There are some churches where once a bishop is elected from that church, it becomes a seat of the bishop. But there are also pastors who have gone. They have built churches and then they have created their own opportunity to minister. They have done it with a certain level of respect. And they can run for Bishop. So, I just feel for you now. I'm thinking of that Mackenzie. Now I don't know if anybody was elected from her church before her. But she had a very, very, very strong church, and so I don't feel that she was elected because she was a woman. She should have been elected because she had done her work. I had Sarah Davis. She had a strong church, and I don't know if a Bishop

was elected in her church before her, but she was elected. That's correct. She was presiding elder at the time, and so she was able to pull through.

Sharon Moore:

I don't know how she had been as a pastor right. Right. She had smaller charges. Her last charge was people that are in rural areas. But then here's what happened. But she was the first female presiding elder in that whole state of California, so she made history that way.

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

Yeah. Well, now, I'm going to have to be honest, when you probably need to cut the tape.

Sharon Moore:

I asked you the very last question: what discriminatory, misogynistic, or sexist experiences and encounters have you engaged in the AME Church? You've already said it throughout this time of recap, but just to refresh you on your response, Dr. Flake, you said, when appointed to my church, some predicted failure. I am sure because they thought a woman could not handle the church. You also mentioned that in the beginning. But I want to thank you for being bold enough and transparent enough to put that down, and I want to let you know that you have a whole lot of people praying for you. Women. So, I'm serious. I'm serious. We see the subliminal attacks. But let me tell you, the weapon has been formed. But I'm believing with all my heart it isn’t going to

prosper in Jesus' name. Not to such a degree. So, it's not the anointed and do the prophet no harm. People forget about that scripture, don't they? Is there anything that you would like to add to anything that we've discussed Dr. Flake?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

The only thing that I would like you to know is that I would make clear that for some of my sisters, they've had experiences where they've had to preach from the floor, and they have. You know they've not been you. Well, I won't even talk about being paid. I don't know if I have experienced the level of discrimination that many of them have. I think I've heard Joanne Browning talk about it, and others, because I guess when I came into Ministry, I did come in as Floyd's wife. But I also came in a few years after Jessica and Joanne, so I think some of their experiences may have been even more glaring regarding how they may have been viewed or treated. And some of that treatment was not in an AME church. It was in a Baptist church. I've never even experienced it from a Baptist, but I do feel that it's there. I remember one time a guy said to me once, "I used to not believe, but you made me believe in women preachers." When his pastor invited me, he was not happy about it, but he did come and he responded. Whatever. So, I do feel that my experiences as a woman may not have been as negative or as bigoted as some other women.

Sharon Moore:

I just want to say that I thank you for acknowledging that. I'd like you talk to the generations to come. I'm talking about the YPDers that we say are 26 and younger. And now we have Gen 0 behind Gen Z. If you had to advise them as a female coming into the ministry of the AME Church. What advice would you leave with them?

Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake:

I would say a couple of things. Sometimes when they come and talk to me about being called, they say things like how much student loan that they have. Sometimes they say $95,000, $110,000, and I'll say, if you feel proud to please, wherever you go, you get a full ride because you don't need to do this. I know that the nomination is not going to put them in churches that can help them right their incurred debt. So, I say I know that the call to ministry can put stars in one's eyes, but I try to remind them to be rational and think about what they're doing. But be sure that you're not digging yourself in a hole, because what I find is that after they dig themselves in that hole financially, they become bitter because they were forced to go to somebody. That's one thing that I say, and then the other thing I would say, keep your job, you know, build your profession. In fact, I told one of my ministers, just take the local route. Your next advanced degree should be in your profession. You have two children, you're a single mother with two children getting an MBA. That's nothing to you. But if you get an MBA. She was. She had a job at one of the airlines. It was moving. She was moving up. And so, she asked me, what should I do? I said. You get that MBA first? Good. I don't doubt your call, but you know. And Jessica. People like this, you would disagree with me, but I'm more on the practical side just to things.

you know because we've had this discussion. If you do it for them: and maybe that's true. But I would say, be very careful, and make sure that your the steps that you are making are steps that are healthy that are realistic. And you know, will take you where you need to go in both rounds, professional as well as spiritual. That's good. I would say, Try not to have a chip on your shoulder. And be combative in every situation, because some of the brothers are hurting, too. I've heard them stand up and say, "I've been serving this choice for 45 years, and this is the first time I ever got a chance to preach at an annual conference." So, I there's some of that. So, we don't want to disregard the pain of other women, or the pain of them because there is a pecking order in our denomination. They could record it, and then there are some of the other men who may not be as gifted. They may, you know. I don't know. I really know right. But I just heard that kind of pain expressed over the pull could come in. Yes, yes, yes, we are not doing well, and we have to remember to keep the main thing the main thing.

Sharon Moore:

Thank you for letting his kingdom come and his will be done, and trying to make certain that we're not trying to build our own kingdoms guilty. His kingdom! That will make a difference. This has been my delight. You put so much meat on the bone. I want to thank you. This is not gravy. Amen. While you have me on the phone, I want to thank you so very much just for not only saying yes to the call to ministry but yes, to being willing to help others. So many people can ride high in the hall, but they're not trying to help others. And just the mentorship that you have provided to me, and just with the example that you gave to the young lady on your staff. That experience calls us to practical advice, and those are the sort of priceless nuggets. You can't.

You can't just get that anywhere. So, I want to thank you. I want to thank you so much. Okay, God bless you. Thank you so much.

Chapter 3: THE PROJECT PARTICIPANTS AND METHODS

This chapter will discuss the process used to determine the participants for this project and the methods utilized to gather the information that formulates the findings for this project. The remainder of the chapter will provide the survey administered to each participant and give background information and abbreviated biographies of each participant.

Recruiting The Participants

The interviewer (Sharon Moore) desired to interview women in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination who, by all accounts, have a myriad of ministerial accomplishments within the denomination. Each participant for the interviews and surveys is an ordained itinerant clergy member in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Ordination in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination is a challenging accomplishment. It takes the completion of four years of classes in the Board of Examiners (a classroom-styled process in which candidates for ordination throughout the Episcopal Districts are taught information that is synonymous to classes one engages in a seminary and detailed information about the denomination.) The candidates are examined annually for advancement to the next class for the next year, and a Master's degree is required from an accredited seminary for an elder's ordination. All

participants are ordained Itinerant Elders except one who is an Ordained Itinerant Deacon (the first ordination with a minimum of an undergraduate degree). Still, she is also an accomplished attorney and will receive her final ordination as Itinerant Elder upon completing her seminary classes. Ordination as an Itinerant Elder is a preacher's highest ordination in the AME Church. All Bishops in this denomination are ordained Itinerant Elders.

The interviewer had previous personal interactions with each participant, and the remainder were more professional engagements. The participants in the group encompass five generations, ranging from the post-war generation, which comprises people born between 1929 and 1945, to the millennials, who are people born between the years 1981 and 1996. Initially, the aim was ten participants, and as the project materialized, three other names were initiated that would aid in substantiating the whole brevity of this project. The thirteen women for this project represent the following generations:

One preacher from the Post War generation who was born between the years of 1928--1945; Five preachers from the Boomers I Generation who were born between the years of 1946--1954; Three preachers from the Boomers II Generation who were born between the years of 1955-1964; Three preachers from the Gen X Generation who were born between the years of 1965-1980; One preacher from the Millennial Generation who was born between the years of 1981-1996.

The method for identifying the interviewees was based upon a desire to have a cross-section of participants from various generations and Episcopal Districts who have experienced a ministry in the AME Church for at least three years. The thirteen participants represent eight of the thirteen inland districts (located in the continental United States). The Districts represented

and their respective Annual Conferences represented within each Episcopal District are the First Episcopal District which comprises Bermuda, Delaware, New England, New Jersey, New York, Western New York, and Philadelphia; the Second Episcopal District which comprises Baltimore, Washington, Virginia, North Carolina, and Western North Carolina; the Third Episcopal District which comprises Pittsburgh-West Virginia, Ohio-South Ohio, and North Ohio; the Fourth Episcopal District which comprises Indiana, Chicago, Illinois, Michigan, Canada, and India; the Fifth Episcopal District which comprises California, Southern California, Desert Mountain, Midwest, Missouri, and Pacific Northwest; the Sixth Episcopal District which comprises Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Atlanta-North, Macon, South Georgia, and Augusta; the Tenth Episcopal District which comprises Texas, Southwest Texas, North Texas, and Northwest Texas; and the Thirteenth Episcopal District which comprises Kentucky, East Tennessee, West Tennessee, and Tennessee.

I desired to interview women who had experience in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, were trailblazers in their respective assignments, and were known outside of their ministry context because they had established themselves through their work and opportunities afforded to them.

The initial contact was made by text to the participants with whom the interviewer had a more personal relationship. The other participants were initially contacted by emails, which were received from people who had the information and were able to provide intercessory contact to explain my reason for wanting to contact them. All thirteen individuals contacted were willing to participate in my project (which includes my Cohort Mentor). After the initial contact, and the participant expressing interest in participating, an email was sent with a letter of thanks for their willingness to participate. Along with the letter, a twenty-question survey was attached to the

email requesting that the survey be completed. Twelve of the thirteen participants completed the survey. After the survey was completed, a one-on-one Zoom interview was scheduled with each participant. Twelve one-on-one interviews were conducted via Zoom; one interview was conducted on the phone. The one-on-one interviews were conducted between May and July of 2023. Each interview was scheduled for one hour, and all of them exceeded the one-hour scheduled time by fifteen to twenty minutes. All of the women were quite engaging and most of them admitted that they had never been asked about their ministerial journey in the AME Church.

After each interview was completed, a follow-up email was sent requesting that each participant choose the best date of two choices for a Final Group Zoom meeting. Seven participants chose the earlier date in August, and five chose the later date in September. One participant has yet to respond. A follow-up email was sent to each participant apprising them of the date choice. A separate email was sent to each participant with the Zoom link for the Zoom call. Nine of thirteen participants were present at the final Group Zoom call. Two of the participants who had voted for the later date were able to join the call on the earlier date. The final Zoom call with all participants was conducted on Thursday, August 31, 2023.

The Survey's Intent

The survey was used as a preliminary document to gauge the foundational exposure of the participant to potential sexism, discrimination, and misogyny. The survey later served as a tool to formulate the interview questions for espousal, clarification, and insight into each

participant's experience as a woman in ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME). Church.

The Survey

The Survey consists of 18 closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions. Each question is presented to afford honest responses to be divulged about a topic that is often ignored or not discussed in macro clergy circles. The last two questions encourage thoughts about the historical context of women in ministry in the denomination and encourage the participant to articulate in her own words her experiences as a female clergyperson in the A.M.E. Church.

A Survey For Rev. Sharon Moore's Project Participants

Project Title: "The Challenges of The Female Preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church"

Instructions: These questions have been developed to obtain unbiased and open responses. On open-ended questions, please feel free to expound and engage details that will support your answer. On close-ended questions, please respond transparently, and also, if you desire, don't hesitate to engage details that will support your response. Please put an **"X"** next to your response.

1. Do you believe the A.M.E. Church has been complicit in condoning sexism, discrimination, or misogyny? YES _____ NO _____ (If you responded YES, please proceed to the remaining questions, and respond to each of them)

2. Have you ever been the only female in any ministry context in the A.M.E. Church? YES _____ NO _____

3. Have you ever witnessed less qualified male preachers obtaining opportunities or positions that could have been afforded more qualified female preachers? YES _____ NO _____

4. Have you *experienced* the unfavorable attitude(s) of a man/men towards you? YES_____ NO _____

5. Have you ever had to *address* unfavorable attitudes towards you from male colleagues? YES ___ NO_____

6. Have you experienced discrimination or mistreatment from other females in the A.M.E. Church? YES_____ NO_____

7. Are you more surprised at men's attitudes toward you or that some women are guilty of mistreatment and discrimination? MEN_____ WOMEN_____

8. Do you feel that men are intimidated by the increased number of women accepting calls to preach and getting elevated to positions that men traditionally dominate? YES_____ NO _____

9. Do you think that discriminatory practices and feelings towards female preachers will dissipate in the years to come in the A.M.E. Church? YES_____ NO_____

10. Have you ever been intimidated by the unfavorable attitudes of men towards you? YES_____

NO _____

11. Are there any scriptures that men have used toward you to justify their attitudes of sexism, discrimination, or misogyny? YES_____ NO_____

12. Have you ever served in a Presiding Elder District led by a female Presiding Elder? YES _____ NO_____

13. Have you ever served in an Episcopal District led by a female Bishop? YES_____ NO_____

14. Have you ever served as a delegate to the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church? YES _____ NO_____

15. Do you feel that the culture (the 'understood' way of doing things) of the A.M.E. Church is a good one? YES_____ NO_____

16. Do you feel that the system (the laws that govern our structure) of the A.M.E. Church is a good one? YES_____ NO_____

17. Do you feel female preachers are taken seriously in the A.M.E. Church? YES_____ NO_____

18. Do you feel more female preachers are needed in more leadership positions in the A.M.E. Church? YES_____ NO-----_____

19. Five Women In Ministry have been elected and consecrated as Bishops in the 207-year history of the A.M.E. Church. Why do you think there have only been five elected and consecrated? (Use space below).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

20. What discriminatory, misogynistic, or sexist experiences and encounters have you engaged in the A.M.E. Church? (Use space below).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Survey Results From 12 Respondents

Question	YES Question #7 WOMEN	NO Question #7 NEITHER
1. Do you believe the A.M.E. Church has been complicit in condoning sexism, discrimination, or misogyny?	12	0
2. Have you ever been the only female in any ministry context in the A.M.E. Church	8	4
3. Have you ever witnessed less qualified male preachers obtaining opportunities or positions that could have been afforded more qualified female preachers?	12	0
4. Have you *experienced* the unfavorable attitude(s) of a man/men towards you?	10	2
5. Have you ever had to *address* unfavorable attitudes towards you from male colleagues?	9	3
6. Have you experienced discrimination or mistreatment from other females in the A.M.E. Church?	10	2
7. Are you more surprised at men's attitudes toward you or that some women are guilty of mistreatment and discrimination?	9	3
8. Do you feel that men are intimidated by the increased number of women accepting calls to preach and getting elevated to positions that men traditionally dominate?	11	1
9. Do you think that discriminatory practices and feelings towards female preachers will dissipate in the years to come in the A.M.E. Church?	5	7
10. Have you ever been intimidated by the unfavorable attitudes of men towards you?	5	7
11. Are there any scriptures that men have used toward you to justify their attitudes of sexism, discrimination, or misogyny?	6	6
12. Have you ever served in a Presiding Elder District led by a female Presiding Elder?	4	8
13. Have you ever served in an Episcopal District led by a female Bishop?	4	8

14. Have you ever served as a delegate to the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church?	8	4
15. Do you feel that the culture (the 'understood' way of doing things) of the A.M.E. Church is a good one?	1	9-no 2-neither
16. Do you feel that the system (the laws that govern our structure) of the A.M.E. Church is a good one?	7	5
17. Do you feel female preachers are taken seriously in the A.M.E. Church	8-YES 1-I hope so	3
18. Do you feel more female preachers are needed in more leadership positions in the A.M.E. Church?	11	1
The last two questions on the survey were open ended questions for participant to answer		
19. Five Women In Ministry have been elected and consecrated as Bishops in the 207-year history of the A.M.E. Church. Why do you think there have only been five elected and consecrated? (Use space below).	_____	_____
20. What discriminatory, misogynistic, or sexist experiences and encounters have you engaged in the A.M.E. Church? (Use space below).	_____	_____

Survey Analysis

All the respondents agreed that the African Methodist Episcopal Church has been complicit in condoning sexism, discrimination, and misogyny. The Connectional President for Women In Ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a candidate for Bishop at the 2024 General Conference said, "We can't deny the history. If we want to change it, we can change where we go, but we can't deny the fact that the AME Church was set up as a patriarchal system, and it was set up so that women did not serve in leadership positions in lay or clergy leadership positions in the church."

Only 33% of the questions had 80% of the participants respond in the affirmative. (Questions: 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, & 18). Each of those six questions was gender-based questions, and the most disappointing response in this group was the 83% who indicated that they had experienced discrimination or mistreatment from other females in the AME Church. (Question 6).

It was refreshing to see the optimism from **42%** of the participants on **question number 9,** who feel that the discriminatory practices towards female preachers will dissipate in the years to come in the AME Church.

The interviewer experienced an astonishing response when 42% of the participants responded to question #10 in the affirmative. They indicated that they had been intimidated by the unfavorable attitudes of men towards them.

These women are influential leaders and accomplished in their respective callings and ministries. They have held major leadership positions in their Annual Conferences, Episcopal Districts, and the Connectional Church. They have served as delegates to General Conferences,

preached during Connectional meetings, have preached at Hampton Ministers Conference, and in four of the five instances were the first females to pastor their respective churches. But, they have been intimidated by the unfavorable responses of men. What was it about this culture that made them feel intimidated by men?

On question #3 of the survey, the respondents were asked if they had ever witnessed less qualified male preachers obtaining opportunities or positions that could have been afforded to more qualified female preachers. They responded unanimously yes. I found it interesting that the most senior respondent, Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry, the second female elected to the position of Bishop in the history of the AME Church and had previously served as the first Presiding Elder in the Fifth Episcopal District of the AME Church indicated that she feels that this happens less frequently now. This response could be viewed as a relative statement because she is a part of the post war generation and remembers much more overt oppression of women and opportunities afforded them, so to her, it may be less frequent than what she previously experienced. On question #8, the respondents were asked if they feel that men are intimidated by the increased number of women accepting calls to preach and getting elevated to positions that men dominate. Ninety-two percent of the respondents agreed, and Bishop Guidry expounded that she feels it is mostly the older men now.

The Project Participants

Rev. Dr. Karen Anderson

Dr. Anderson serves in the 5th Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church as the Senior Pastor of First A.M.E. Church in Las Vegas, Nevada, and is the church's first female pastor. Before her appointment to FAME Las Vegas, she served three congregations in the Missouri Annual Conference. She has served in several leadership capacities and is the past Women In Ministry Coordinator in the Missouri Annual Conference, the past 5th Episcopal District Secretary for Women In Ministry, and the current 1st Vice President for the 5th Episcopal District Women In Ministry. She was the Co-Founder, along with Rev. Traci Blackmon, began an ecumenical women's ministry bible study in St. Louis, MO entitled: *When Women Gather*. In 2023, Turner Theological Seminary inducted her into the Henry McNeal Turner Alumni Hall of FAME.

Rev. Kabrielle Baker

Rev. Baker is a child of the parsonage who has followed in her father's footsteps, having pastored two churches in the 4th Episcopal District of the AME Church in Michigan. She later expanded her net and transferred to the 1st Episcopal District, and served as the Executive Pastor at Bethel AME Church in Buffalo, New York. Upon completing that assignment, she returned to her home district and serves as an associate minister at the church where her father pastors. Rev. Baker has received numerous awards and has represented the church on a connectional level on more than one occasion and is a respected voice for young adults in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown

Dr. Fry Brown is a General Officer in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and is the Historiographer/Executive Director, Department of Research and Scholarship for the

Connectional A.M.E. Church. She holds the Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, and is the first tenured Black female in Candler School of Theology and the third Black Female full professor at Emory University. She is the author of several books and one of the most popular is *Can A Sistah Get a Little Help: Advice and Encouragement for Black Women In Ministry*.

Rev. Dr. Jo Ann Browning

Dr. Browning is the co-pastor of Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, MD, where her husband serves as the Senior Pastor. She has served this congregation for forty years as of June 2023. The church has grown from seventeen members to more than eight thousand members. Browning has organized and convened more than thirty-five annual spiritual women's conferences that attract thousands from throughout the United States and worldwide. She is the first Pastor's wife to receive a Co-Pastor appointment from a Presiding Bishop in the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She is the author of Our Savior, Our Sisters, Ourselves.

Rev. Vivian Clarington

Rev. Clarington is the Senior Pastor of St. Peter's AME Church in Decatur, Illinois, and its first female Pastor. Rev. Clarington served as the President of Women in Ministry for the Illinois Annual Conference for two years. Before pastoring in Illinois, she pastored in Detroit, Michigan. She served in politics for State Representative, Artina Hardman from Detroit as the Chief of Staff and Senior Faith Base Coordinator for six years.

Rev. Dr. Mila P. Cooper

Dr. Cooper is the Associate Minister of Wayman AME Church in Dayton, Ohio where her husband serves as the Senior Pastor. Dr. Cooper served as a Senior Pastor in Cleveland, Ohio, ten years ago, before being appointed the Co-Pastor of St. James AME Church in Cleveland, Ohio, where her husband served as Senior Pastor. She founded four The Kingdom Ministry, a ministry for women's empowerment, and sought to instruct and empower women from a mentorship paradigm of preaching and teaching to generations in a succession of those

proclaiming the Word. She is the Education Director of Career Education and Community Development at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, specializing in the intersection of race and justice.

Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford

Dr. Crawford is the Senior Pastor of Mt. Zion in Dover, Delaware, and the Connectional President for Women In Ministry for the AME Church. Rev. Crawford is the Pastor of Mt Zion African Methodist Episcopal Ebenezer Church of Dover, DE. There, she led the congregation in total debt liquidation, the acquisition of land, and rezoning all its properties while becoming a total tithing church.

In addition to her Pastoral responsibilities and commitment to Women In Ministry, she is a Chaplain/Pastoral Consultant for the WNBA Chaplains Association, a member of the First Episcopal District Self-Help Committee, member of the Delaware Annual Conference Board of Trustees, Dean of the Delaware Annual Conference Ministerial Institute, member of the Pan-Methodist Commission; a co-founder and convener of High Heels Seeking Higher Ground Women's Retreat Ministry; a life member of the NAACP; co-founder of The ToolShed Community a forum for racial dialogue, a member of the Trauma Delaware Resilience Working

Group, member of The Village, a community education support group; Director of Stewardship for the First Episcopal District of the AME Church.

Dr. Crawford is a candidate for Bishop in 2024. If elected, she will be the sixth woman to be elected and consecrated as a Bishop in the AME Church's 208-year history.

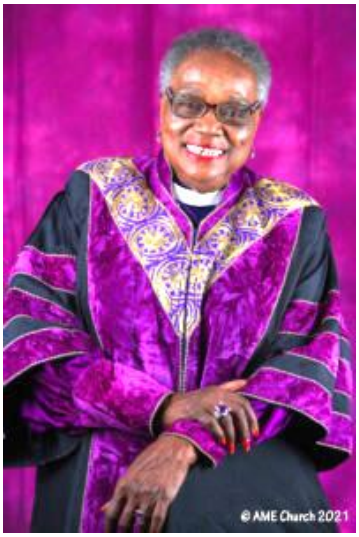
Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake

Dr. Flake is the Senior Pastor of the Greater Allen Cathedral of New York. Before becoming the Senior Pastor, she was the Co-Pastor of the church for more than two decades alongside her husband. In 1983, she co-founded the Allen Christian School in Jamaica, NY, serving over five hundred African American students. She went on to found the Allen Women's Resource Center, providing services to women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. The Center also partnered with New York's 'Superwoman Program' to help women find non-traditional careers. That same year, Reverend Flake began the Allen Prison Ministry, the Allen Cancer Support Ministry, and the Allen HIV/AIDS Spiritual Support Ministry. These resources together made the Cathedral a central point in Queens, New York. For forty years, she has also hosted women's conferences that draw women worldwide. She has authored several books, and her solo project is *God in Her Midst: Preaching Healing to Hurting Women.*

Rev. Dr. Ann Lightner Fuller

Dr. Lightner-Fuller, one of the top female preachers in the country, is a woman of many firsts. She was the first woman in the Baltimore Conference to serve on the General Board, the first coordinator of Women in Ministry for the Second District, the first woman to preach the annual sermon in the Baltimore Annual Conference, and the first woman to preach the morning service at the Hampton University Ministers' Conference. One of Dr. Lightner-Fuller's greatest highlights in ministry was being invited by President Barack H. Obama to speak at the White House for his annual Easter Prayer Breakfast on April 7, 2015. It was a great honor to be shared with the Connectional African Methodist Episcopal Church. In retirement, Dr. Lightner-Fuller continues to use her gifts. She leads one of the inaugural cohorts of the Doctor of Ministry students at Payne Theological Seminary.

Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry



In 1994, Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry was appointed the first female presiding elder in the Fifth Episcopal District. On July 5, 2004, Tyler Guidry was elected to become only the second female bishop in the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Tyler Guidry received her Master of Theology degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in 2004. Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry was the first woman ordained an Itinerant in the Southern California Annual Conference's history. She is a founder of the Committee for Women In Ministry and the Commission for Women In Ministry and served as the Connectional Women In Ministry President for four years. She also contributes to the fourth edition of *Those Preaching Women*.

Rev. Dr. Jessica K. Ingram

Rev. Dr. Ingram is the retired Episcopal Supervisor of the first Episcopal District of the AME Church. Dr. Ingram oversaw the work of the Women's Missionary Society and the Minister's Spouses, to name a few. Before this position, she taught Women In Ministry, Spiritual Formation, and Ministerial Ethics classes at Ashland Theological Seminary. Dr. Ingram founded the L.I.F.T. Women's Resource Center to address the needs of women who are recovering from physical, mental, and substance abuse. The Center has served more than 30,000 women since its inception.

Rev. Babydoll Kennedy

Rev. Babydoll Kennedy is an ordained Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and has served the local church for over 25 years. She is the former Senior Pastor of Taylor Chapel AME Church in Bowling Green, Kentucky. She serves as the Religion Ambassador at Tennessee State University, where she teaches Introduction to Religious Studies and Introduction to Philosophy and is the advisor for several student organizations. Reverend Kennedy holds degrees from Tennessee State University, Drew University, and Union Theological Seminary in New York. Rev. Kennedy has overseen several ministries, including Tamar and the Encouragement Ministry at St. James AME Church in Newark, NJ.

Rev. Yulise R. Waters, Esq.

Rev. Yulise Reaves Waters, Esq. is the Chief Innovations Officer of Lone Star Justice Alliance (LSJA). Previously, Waters was an Assistant City Attorney and Lead Community Courts Prosecutor for the City of Dallas, where she co-founded the Second Chance Community Improvement Program (SCCIP) in 2014, which became the first-ever felony community court in Dallas County and the first-ever young adult specialty court in the State of Texas. A graduate of Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, Texas, Waters earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English (magna cum laude) and in Spanish (magna cum laude) and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with an emphasis in Organizational Behavior and Business Policy (magna cum laude). Waters was named the Senior Woman of the Year of the Cox School of Business and Senior Woman of the Year of SMU (Overall). Named to the Dallas Business Journal's "40 Under 40" Class of 2016 of young professionals representing "innovation and excellence in their fields," Waters' name has twice been added to the City of Dallas' Wall of Honor for meritorious service to the citizens of Dallas. She has been named "One-to-Watch" by SMU Magazine, listed as a "Featured Graduate" of SMU Dedman Law by The Quad Magazine, and she is a recipient of

the History Maker Award of the Black Alumni of SMU, their highest honor. Rev. Waters is the Associate Minister of Joy Tabernacle A.M.E. Church in Dallas, Texas, where her husband is the Senior Pastor.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS ON A GENDER POWER PLAY

This chapter will discuss the themes from the interviews with thirteen women. More specifically, three broad themes emerged after completing the surveys and interviews. The first theme was around a culture of power within the AME hierarchy. The second theme from the interviews was that the men were invested in holding onto their power. Finally, a third theme centered around women explicitly being blocked from positions of power within the hierarchy of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to maintain its present patriarchal culture. Information will be presented from each of the Episcopal Districts of the denomination substantiating discriminatory practices, and statistical data will be noted to highlight the disparity in leadership opportunities held by women in ministry in the AME Church.

The Culture of Power

To discuss the culture around power in the African Methodist Episcopal Church would be synonymous with attempting to analyze why there are so many systemic problems that plague many of our predominantly African American cities in America. We know that the issue exists, and we also understand that there are many tentacles to the main problem, but to pinpoint the totality of the source, which has now evolved into something virtually impossible to identify

because it has now become multi-layered with additional tentacles sprouting from the original root; and, that root is known, but not always seen because it is hidden behind the other tentacles and branches.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church's foundation was birthed with liberation at the forefront of its vision. As is stated in its history, "The AMEC grew out of the Free African Society (FAS) which Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others established in Philadelphia in 1787. When officials at St. George's MEC pulled Black people off their knees while praying, FAS members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial discrimination against African Americans. St. George's members planned to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation. Although most wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Allen led a small group that resolved to remain Methodists. In 1794, Bethel AME was dedicated with Allen as pastor. To establish Bethel's independence from interfering white Methodists, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution. Because black Methodists in other Middle Atlantic communities encountered racism and desired religious autonomy, Allen called them to meet in Philadelphia to form a new Wesleyan denomination, the AME."[44] The historical context of rejecting a denomination that would enforce racial discrimination against women experiencing misogyny, patriarchy, sexism, and discrimination is a blatant example of becoming the very thing that the Church fought so hard to escape–mistreatment and ostracization.

[44] Official AME Church Website-African Methodist Episcopal Church. ame-church.com. https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history.

Rev. Yulise Waters, Esq., who is the Chief Innovations Officer of Lone Star Justice Alliance (LSJA), was an Assistant City Attorney and Lead Community Courts Prosecutor for the City of Dallas where she co-founded the Second Chance Community Improvement Program (SCCIP) in 2014 which became the first-ever felony community court in Dallas County and the first-ever young adult specialty court in the State of Texas; and is an Associate Minister of Joy Tabernacle A.M.E. Church in Dallas, Texas, indicates when responding to question #19 on the survey,

> "The system and structure have historically been driven by men, which I believe just stems from the nationwide and even worldwide patriarchy that has been ingrained in our norms and ethos. I think the women consecrated and elected as Bishops in our denomination are the trailblazers who have been called to break the glass ceiling and challenge the systems' norms and mores. Progress has to begin somewhere, and I believe this progress began with them. There are more to come."

Women are the largest demographic in our denomination, and the percentage of women accepting their calls to ministry has increased significantly in recent decades. The African Methodist Episcopal Church will have to look introspectively and engage in some extraction of the present patriarchal and misogynistic culture that has never been a sustainable model. Sometimes people make the mistake of assuming that it is not wrong because something has been done a certain way for so long. Nothing could be further from the truth. Slavery in this country lasted a long time, but every person with a moral compass knew and knew that it was wrong.

Rev. Dr. Jessica Ingram is a retired Episcopal District Supervisor of Missions in the African Methodist Church and an ordained Itinerant Elder who is the second Episcopal District Supervisor in the denomination's history also to be ordained clergy with Rev. Dr. Cecelia Williams Bryant, who is also a retired Episcopal Supervisor being the first.

Dr. Ingram said,

> "It has been a part of the mindset of this denomination, which we are not by ourselves, that women are not necessarily equal to men in their giftedness, and if they are, they've got to wait their turn to get into certain positions. I guess I'm kind of hesitating because it is not always so blatant as far as being verbally articulated. As I think about it, unlike the Baptist tradition, I've never heard a Bishop or a Pastor articulate that women are not called to preach. I haven't heard it verbalized, but in subtle and overt ways, it has been articulated. As I think about it, that's a deep piece. Although it has not been necessarily spoken, it has been a reality for many women. As I said, I grew up when women preachers were just not present. Not that they were not called, but like me, many of them did not know that they were called. It is a culture that is changing, but it's changing because the landscape is changing. It's changing because I would dare say that at least in the past ten years or so when you look at the Board of Examiners and those persons coming for ordination, the overwhelming number of them are women. Women now have more positions as pastors and presiding elders. I think not so much because the brothers really, really believe, but because the numbers have changed, and they want to have people pastoring these churches, so they've gotta do the women. It may be a class of 15 persons and two of them are men."

The desire that the male clergy exerts to maintain power is often verbally subtle, but the results of actions in closed-door meetings are evident by actions taken for the men to preserve their traditional leadership positions. However, the trajectory of the percentages of women entering into ministry has significantly increased. But another even more subtle form of misogyny that is not discussed in the church is encroached upon female preachers by other women. On question #7 in my survey, I asked, *"Are you more surprised at men's attitudes or that some women are guilty of mistreatment and discrimination?* 75% of the participants said they were more surprised by the treatment from women, but all of the remaining 25% responded that they were not surprised by either the men or the women. A subculture to this surprising misogynistic attitude and mindset propagated by women towards female clergy is the female pastor's discrimination toward ordained clergy who are not pastoring.

This was evident in my interview with Rev. Dr. Jessica Ingram when she said,

> "I have operated as a clergy couple in ministry. In the status quo, there are positions I've never been considered for because I'm not a pastor. So, there's a separation there even though I might be qualified. I have experienced that because we have this concept that being a pastor is the ultimate and that if you are not pastoring, you are not looked upon as having the power, the status, etc. So, what I have experienced from some women pastors is kind of looking at me as not being in the same category as them. That has been verbally articulated, articulated in nonverbal ways and it's not been the case everywhere I've been, but in one particular District this was the case. It was very hurtful, and I said to them that just as you expect for people to accept you at a church as a first female preacher, then the same should apply to me as the first Episcopal Supervisor you have had

> that is ordained clergy. The very ones who get upset about how people are treating you in the church and now you're doing that to me because I'm a Supervisor who is ordained, but I'm not a pastor, and you feel that I don't belong in certain spaces."

Further emphasis on this same topic was substantiated in my interview with Rev. Dr. Mila Cooper, the Associate Minister at Wayman AME Church in Dayton, Ohio, and an ordained Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church who is married to a male Pastor. She was also the first appointed Co-Pastor, male or female, in the history of the 3rd Episcopal District. After having received that historical appointment as Co-Pastor from one Bishop, it was short-lived, because when he retired, the Bishop who succeeded him did not give Dr. Cooper an appointment as Co-Pastor. The Bishop said, "The Doctrine & Discipline does not call for that. Your husband has the authority to give you a title in the local church context, but you should consult with your stewards." Dr. Cooper said, "At the Bishop's suggestion, we had the conversation with the stewards, and the congregation was very receptive. Someone had a problem with me being named Co-Pastor by my husband and called the Bishop. The Bishop had the Elder call my husband, and the Bishop began to backtrack his initial suggestion, so we stopped using that title. So, again, it was short-lived."

The Cooper pastoral team approached another Bishop who followed that Bishop to their District, about the Co-Pastor appointment. Dr. Cooper recalls the conversation:

> "He said he would be willing to consider it. Now in your survey you asked a question about whether we are more surprised by the mistreatment from females or males, I have a perfect example. Our Bishop was going to consider appointing

> me as Co-Pastor until a Presiding Elder wrote a multi-page document against it. To this day, she doesn't know that we know, and she's a she."

The interviewer asked a clarifying question, "So, the Bishop was amenable, but it wasn't until a female expressed discontentment about the possibility of that appointment and the Bishop retracted his willingness of consideration for the appointment?" Dr. Cooper said, "That is correct." The interviewer then stated, "So, when the Bishop retracted what he said he would do, he did it because of an outcry from the people in our episcopal governed church. What are your thoughts about those decisions being made by the highest office to be ordained, elected, and consecrated taking a stance that does not support the name of the denomination in which they are serving? This is the AME Church, with heavy emphasis on the "E" for Episcopal. How do you feel about two Bishops taking a more congregational approach?"

Dr. Cooper said,

> "That's an excellent question and analysis. I would say I am somewhat conflicted about this. In one of your questions, you asked about our system and whether or not I thought it was effective, and often, I don't think it was good for us in 2023. However, at this point, it is an episcopal and bishop-led church. That's what we're in and that's what we are accustomed to. We pray that those decisions are under the influence of the Holy Spirit and God, but that's the system that we have and it's very inconsistent. These are imperfect men and women, I understand that. But they are influenced in different ways in different scenarios, and do they allow those influences to impact their decisions? So, in one instance, oh no I'm the Bishop; it's an episcopal decision and I'm going to do this. In other instances, it's the culture, it's the people, it's congregational. I'm not suggesting that

> congregations shouldn't have some impact when it's more of a positive thing; but not that we don't want a woman and those kinds of discriminatory practices. I do believe in a marriage between the pastor and the people. However, because the decisions are not consistent and feels like whichever way the wind blows, it feels kind of hypocritical and that's been difficult."

Another participant, Rev. Babydoll Kennedy, a former Senior Pastor of Taylor Chapel AME Church in Bowling Green, KY. She is presently an associate minister serving at St. John AME Church in Nashville, TN and is a professor who serves as the Religion Ambassador at Tennessee State University, where she teaches Introduction to Religious Studies, and Introduction to Philosophy. She does not feel that more female preachers are needed in more leadership positions in the AME Church. She expounds, "The women act worse than the men but because they are women, they don't get called out. Women are just as misogynistic as men, so they don't feel as though women are as qualified."

Rev. Kabrielle Baker, a child of the parsonage who has followed in her father's footsteps, having pastored two churches in the 4th Episcopal District of the AME Church in Michigan. She later expanded her net and transferred to the 1st Episcopal District and served as the Executive Pastor at Bethel AME Church, in Buffalo, New York.

Rev. Baker said,

> "The fact that we have an organization named Women in Ministry is alarming to know that there is a need for people to organize. If there was equity and equality, then they wouldn't need a space exclusively to support those women. I never really was for WIM in Michigan because I heard them being male bashers.

Rev. Baker is my youngest participant. She is a millennial, but she knows the church and contributed much to this project and conversation. She said,

> "They run games in private but boast about it in public. This culture teaches you how to retaliate. So, I worked behind the scenes and got together with some preachers to ensure that my dad was the first alternate to the General Conference. But it meant that someone that I knew got cut from the ballot. I felt bad, but at the end of the day, y'all was not going to come for my daddy. I had no other options. But all of this led to me wanting to leave the Conference because I told my dad that I was a liability for him. I can't live with you being impacted by this culture because your daughter won't bow to Nebuchadnezzar."

The African Methodist Episcopal Church's Chief Information Officer does not calculate or house any statistics in his office concerning the Commission on Women in Ministry. The statistics that have been gathered were the sole effort of Connectional Women In Ministry. The following chart shows the statistics of Women In Ministry in Episcopal Districts across the Connectional Church which comprises 20 Episcopal Districts and 39 different countries.

QUADRENNIAL AMEWIM STATISTICS

Total number of dues paying WIM									
Total # of WIM Itinerant Elders	Total # of WIM Itinerant Deacons	Total # of WIM Local Elders	Total # of WIM Local Deacons	Total # of WIM Licensed Evangelists	Total # of WIM Exhorters	Total # of WIM Licentiates	Total # of Superannuates	Total # of Associate Members	
128	9	33	3	36	4	15	9	53	290
115	24	1	26	2	5	10	9	4	196
28	3	8	0	0	0	1	0	0	40
78	18	24	7	7	2	6	9	7	158
79	16	5	3	1		0	2	1	107
30	2	3	0	0	0	0	4	1	40
41	7	4	3	2	0	5		0	62
41	3	1	2	1					48
184	94	35	49	19	16	80	120	3	600
35	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	41
41	7	4	2	2	0	5	2	1	64
39	24	2	0	36	1	7	1	4	114
40	17	6	5	2	0	7			77
20	2	18	1	18		2	0	0	61
22	10	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	37
12		0	0			3	0	0	15
933	237	144	102	129	30	143	156	76	1950

	Total Number of Non Dues Paying WIM									
District	Total # of WIM Itinerant Elders	Total # of WIM Itienrant Deacons	Total # of WIM Local Elders	Total # of WIM Local Deacons	Total # of WIM Licensed Evangelists	Total # of WIM Exhorters	Total # of WIM Licentiates	Total # of Superannuates	Total # of WIM Admitted	
1	207	7	113	12	146	6	14	13	39	557
2	213	99	12	150	7	1	61	44	52	639
3	31	19	35	6	13	5	3	17	4	133
5	75	33	49	20	28	1	29	15	20	270
6	50	10	18	5	3	3	15	10	226	340
8	50	6	5	2	0	1	4	10	26	104
9	19	4	3	3	2	0	0	0	4	35
10										
11	56	46	27	24	15	16	36	112	35	367
12	25	8	6	0	6	9	4	19	5	82
13	54	29	12	3	5	6	9	13	195	326
15	52	24	2	0	36	1	7	1	2	125
16									80	80
17	20	0	0		0	10	2	0	2	34
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	2	9
20	0	2	0	0	5	51		1	3	62
	852	287	282	225	266	110	184	262	695	3163

	Total Number of all WIM 2016-2021										
District	Total # of WIM Itinerant Elder	Total # of WIM Itinerant Deacons	Total # of WIM Local Elders	Total # of WIM Local Deacons	Total # of WIM Licensed Evangelists	Total # of WIM Exhorters	Total # of WIM Licentiates	Total # of Superannuates	Total # of Associate Members	Total # of WIM Admitted	
1	335	16	146	15	182	10	29	22	53	39	847
2	328	123	13	176	9	6	71	53	4	52	835
3	59	22	43	6	13	5	4	17	0	4	173
5	153	51	73	27	35	3	35	24	7	20	428
6	129	26	23	8	4	3	15	12	1	226	447
8	80	8	8	2	0	1	4	14	1	26	144
9	60	11	7	6	4	0	5	0	0	4	97
10	41	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	0		48
11	240	140	62	73	34	32	116	232	3	35	967
12	60	9	6	0	9	9	4	19	2	5	123
13	95	36	16	5	7	6	14	15	1	195	390
15	91	48	4	0	72	2	14	2	4	2	239
16	40	17	6	5	2	0	7	0	0	80	157
17	40	2	18	1	18	10	4	0	0	2	95
18	22	10	0	1	0	2	2	7	0	2	46
20	12	2	0	0	5	51	3	1	0	3	77
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
	1785	524	426	327	395	140	327	418	76	695	5113

	Total Number from 7/14/2016 – 4/18/2021										
District	Total # of WIM ordained Itinerant Elder	Total # of WIM ordained Itinerant Deacon	Total # of WIM ordained Local Elder	Total # of WIM ordained Local Deacon	Total # of WIM Licensed as Evangelists	Total # of WIM Licensed as Exhorters	Total # of WIM who died	Total # of WIM Admitted	Total # of women who superannuated	Total # of new churches started	Total # of WIM Pastors
1	48	44	30	21	108	10	21	36	9	1	124
2	34	33	0	17	0	0	17	57	21	2	133
3	5	2	1	2	13	5	5	4	17	0	55
5	11	9	6	8	5	0	3	20	8	1	51
6	250	130	26	23	8	4	7	63	5	0	115
8	20	15	20	6	0	1	8	20	10	0	44
9	52	7	2	2	2	0	3	4		0	29
10											
11	15	12	10	9	13	12	15	16	11	1	115
12	60	9	6	0	9	9	2	5	19	0	69
13	88	38	18	6	7	7	5	164	13	0	51
15	19	9	1	0	8	0	1	5	1	8	77
16	40	17	6	5	2	0	4			22	18
17	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	25
18	6	4	0	0	0	2	7	2	7		31
20	12	2	0		5	51	0	3	1	1	14
	685	331	126	99	180	101	98	399	122	39	951

The above charts are a clear indicator of the presence of Women in Ministry and the power that can be wielded and be an asset to the Connectional Church for the diversity of thought and leadership that is needed to catapult the denomination into a powerful organism for twenty-first century ministry. However, the present power brokers are less than enthused about surrendering their present power in a cultural context that has been and still is male dominated.

There are 5,113 women in ministry in the Connectional Church. Of that number, 38% percent (1,950) female preachers are an official part of the Commission on Women In Ministry because they pay dues. With less than 50% of the female preachers being a part of the Commission, many conclusions can be drawn. Some may not realize the importance of being a part of the organization. Some may not have the money to pay the annual dues which are $80 per year. Leading churches have traditionally paid the dues for the female pastor who has membership with the organization. If a female preacher is not at a leading church and that church has difficulty paying its connectional budget and operational bills, membership in the Connectional Women In Ministry that has a monetary obligation, is the last thing the church is considering. Most of our Presiding Elders and Bishops are men, and many of them do not promote or encourage membership in the Commission on Women In Ministry.

The General Board of the African Methodist Episcopal Church meets twice annually to conduct Connectional Church business during the interim period of each General Conference. The Commission on Women In Ministry reports to the General Board. The AME/WIM General Conference Quadrennial Report that was submitted for the last quadrennial plus an additional year because of COVID contained recommendations that were submitted and are as follows.

ADOPTED COMMISSION ON WOMEN IN MINISTRY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GENERAL BOARD

Year	Request/Recommendation	Status
2019	Connectional Executive Board of AME/WIM request that the Commission and subsequently the General Board accept the following recommendations, that all Episcopal Districts commit to assuring that male clergy are included in appointments to the Women in Ministry Committee in 2020, which was 1% male clergy in 2016.	**Pending**
2019	Connectional Executive Board of AME/WIM request that the Commission and subsequently the General Board accept the following recommendations, that all Episcopal Districts, commit to assuring that women clergy, as distinguished from lay women, are included in major committee appointments for the 2020 General Conference, like: a. the Episcopal Committee, in which 95% of the ministerial seats were male clergy in 2016; and b. the Revisions Committee, in which 75% of the ministerial seats were male clergy in 2016. c. The General Board, in which 84% of the ministerial seats are male clergy 2016-2020.	**Pending**
2019	Connectional Executive Board of AME/WIM request that the Commission and subsequently the General Board accept the following recommendations, that Annual Conferences who have not already elected 2020 General Conference delegates, be purposeful in assuring that clergywomen are equitably represented.	**Pending**
2019	Connectional Executive Board of AME/WIM request that the Commission and subsequently the General Board accept the following recommendations, that on the 5th Sunday in September, (September 29, 2019) that local churches lift up the work and witness of the now, Reverend Jarena Lee in celebration of her being the first woman to be licensed to preach in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1819, 200 years ago this year.	**Pending**
2018	We believe that the time has come for us to collectively and intentionally fulfill the commitments already made to the daughters of the church by re-visiting the wanting, unfinished, pending, and incomplete recommendations before the church. Therefore, the single recommendation of the Executive Board of AME/WIM is that the Commission and subsequently the General Board recommit itself to the incomplete recommendations of 2012-2017	**Pending**
2017	That the General Board empowers each WIM Commission Member to complete an introspective analysis of its Episcopal District's key leadership positions regarding female clergy and report the same to the commission within 90 days.	**Ongoing** We continue to be challenged in receiving information from Episcopal Districts and Annual Conferences
2017	That the General Board empowers the Commission Members to encourage WIM leadership at the Presiding Elder District and Conference Coordinators level to work in collaboration with their respective Presiding Elders to prepare and provide workshops and training to assist	**Pending** AME/WIM is preparing to meet with the Presiding Elders Council to discuss this project

	congregations in fulfilling the church's intentional commitment to gender justice and equality.	
2016	The adoption of this policy/statement regarding the equality and the value of women: *We, The African Methodist Episcopal Church, affirm that all men and women are created equal by God and therefore, entitled to the value of personhood, parity in employment, equal distribution of responsibility, and promotion in ministry.* *We, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, will work to eliminate gender-role stereotypes and discrimination in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the Church and society.* *We, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, will champion economic parity and justice by affirming the right of women to equal treatment and placement in key leadership decision-making positions at all levels of our Church, our Institutions, and our communities.*	**Completed** This statement was adopted by the General Board in December 2016
2016	That the General Board urges our elected officials and government agencies to retain and enact legislation and policies that protect women against all forms of misogyny, violence, and discrimination.	**Ongoing** We are unable to determine if General Board members followed through on this request. However, to date, there has been no public statement from the church regarding such an effort
2016	That the General Board recognizes March as International Women's History Month and strongly encourages local churches to recognize and celebrate the work of women in our Zion.	**Ongoing** The recommendation was adopted by the General Board in December 2016. AME/WIM continues to work and push for every local church to celebrate the theological, social, historical, and cultural significance of women.

When one reviews the above recommendations, there is much to discuss. In 2016, the General Board adopted the recommendation to recognize March as International Women's History Month. The ongoing challenge is to "work and push for every local church to celebrate the theological, social, historical and cultural significance of women."[45] Also in 2016, the Executive Board submitted a recommendation for a policy statement regarding the equality and the value of women: "We, The African Methodist Episcopal Church, affirm that all men and women are created equal by God and therefore, entitled to the value of personhood, parity in employment, equal distribution of responsibility, and promotion in ministry. We, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, will work to eliminate gender-role stereotypes and discrimination in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the church and society. We, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, will champion economic parity and justice by affirming the right of women to equal treatment and placement in key leadership decision-making positions at all levels of our Church, our Institutions, and our communities."[46] When reviewing these two recommendations that were submitted during our bicentennial celebration of our denomination that year, it is sad that the female clergy are still demanding civil rights in this alleged liberating faith and supposedly gender-equal denomination. One other recommendation from the Connectional WIM Executive Board recommended that the General Board urge our elected officials and government agencies to retain and enact legislation and policies that protect women against all forms of misogyny, violence, and discrimination. It is sad to report that this recommendation is

[45] Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford, Commission on AME Women In Ministry Report, 40.

[46] Ibid.

ongoing. The Connectional Executive Board for Women in Ministry indicated that they are unable to determine if General board members followed through on this request. However, there has been no public statement from the church regarding such an effort. The blatant disregard or passive oversight to such an important issue that could provide the female clergy with legal leverage if sexism, discrimination and/or misogyny are being utilized to subjugate qualified female clergy to the cultural normality that has been accepted for far too long is sad at best and cruel at worst. This effort was possibly not enforced because the General Board is majority male, and to initiate such an effort will give women legal recourse to address some of the blatant discriminatory cultures and practices that have been in place to assure that men maintain power and authority in the denomination.

We can witness the low prioritization of WIM's (Women In Ministry's) recommendations because in 2018, the recommendation was the following, "We believe that the time has come for us to fulfill the commitments already made collectively and intentionally to the daughters of the church by revisiting the wanting, unfinished, pending, and incomplete recommendations before the church. Therefore, the single recommendation of the Executive Board of AME/WIM is that the commission and subsequently the General Board recommit itself to the incomplete recommendations of 2012 to 2017."[47]

[47] Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford, Commission, 39

The Group Forum Discussion of Power

Unfortunately, another limitation surfaced that was disheartening at best and angering at worst. In the 20-question survey given to each participant, Question #6 asked, "Have you experienced discrimination or mistreatment from other females in the A.M.E. Church?" Ten out of the 12 survey participants (1 person did not complete the survey) responded in the affirmative, yes–that's 83%. During our culmination Zoom Session, at which 9 of the 13 respondents attended. They were split into two groups and were asked to wrestle with the following questions:

1. Do you believe that the women that have those discriminatory attitudes toward you, have a spirit of covetousness because some of them probably would like to be in your position; or, have they been co-opted into a culture that is use to misogyny, and they are use to a man being in charge, so that is the reason they act and respond the way that they do?
2. With the results of the survey and the statistics that have been compiled and your experience(s) as a woman in ministry documented, if we stay on this course as a denomination, where does it lead us? If we continue at the present trajectory, where does this lead us?

The following are items that were discussed in the two breakout groups. The group discussions were fluid and the original questions that I posed were answered in the framework of their discussions that ensued.

1st Group

Rev. Dr. Mila P. Cooper

Rev. Dr. Elaine M. Flake

Rev. Dr. Jessica K. Ingram

Rev. Babydoll Kennedy

Rev. Yulise Reaves Waters, Esq.

1st Group Report-Spokesperson, Rev. Yulise Waters, Esq.

Topic 1 Discussed–Relationships with Clergywomen and Laywomen

- Lay was not willing to have female pastors and was very much against the idea.
- The experience of being married to a male clergy spouse, being a female clergy spouse, and dealing with women being attracted to "men in uniform."
- Is it blatant misogyny or the cultural space that women are in that causes these women to have this animosity or challenges with women in ministry? We said it is both. We talked about how larger societal patriarchy creates this construct where folks have a different perspective of women in leadership than they otherwise should.

Topic 2 Discussed–Is There Hope for Change in the Future?

Rev. Waters indicated, "We didn't delve into it as much because we spent so much time on the other question. But what we did ask is what does progress look like? What gives us hope?

Hope being that we have come a little bit further than we did 100 years ago, but there is a tough road of hope."

While digesting these responses, what deserves mammoth attention is the fact that less than 20% of the delegation at the General Conference is female clergy. Although several women are serving as delegates, the majority (80%) are laywomen. They are in a position to affect change, but they very well could be plagued with that co-opting spirit referenced earlier that illuminates through the laywomen who do not prefer a female pastor. If they were to be asked specifically why they don't want a female pastor, thus the co-opting because of cultural norms.

2nd Group

Rev. Kabrielle Baker

Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford

Bishop Caroly Tyler Guidry

Rev. Dr. Ann Lightner Fuller

2nd Group Report—Spokesperson, Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford

Topic Discussed–Will it Change?

- One person said that it's going to change because this generation of young men have a different mindset than some of the older men. They are more engaging, accepting, they are more like colleagues
- The number of women coming into ministry is greater than the men

- The senior stateswomen share some of the tilling of the ground that had to take place to get us to where we are now. How if we learn to lift each other up and strategize that it would behoove us, that is what will shift the church
- Shared how women used to sit in the back of the church and now they're moving to the front of the church
- Women are sent to smaller churches and even when it grows, they still don't get the respect they're entitled to when they raise the church to be one of the leading churches in the connection.
- Often the brothers try to take credit for what God had done through the women
- We have to learn to take our power back, to own the success we have had, and the work we have done
- The change in the church will come when we embrace the fact that God has called us, used us, purposed us, and positioned us. We don't have to thank people for that, we thank God for that.

The conversation transitioned because Rev. Kabrielle Baker, a child of the parsonage, who was afforded many ministry opportunities, support, and advice from some of her Pastor Dad's colleagues indicated that, "I have a different perspective on us coming together. In my generation, I do not see that because everyone is building their own kingdom. Everyone wants to build their own–first name, last name, ministries global. And so, because everyone is so busy doing their own thing; being a millennial, I have a fear of what the church looks like. Because outside of this space, I've connected with about ninety percent of you, but the women in my generation, I don't trust them because they are fighting for the space I am in."

Rev. Dr. Jessica K. Ingram was very surprised by Rev. Baker's comment: "I was just very surprised by what she said. But, if young people are having these problems, what is our hope for the future? We are supposed to be leaving the church to them."

In response to Rev. Baker's claim, Rev. Dr. Elaine Flake offered this perspective,

> "Rev. Baker's concerns are not gender-based, it's generational. I've heard pastors, especially Baptist pastors say that they will not hire a millennial because they are more self-centered, self-absorbed, and self-aggrandizing than the generations before and after them. It's not the gender, it's the generation."

Rev. Baker and Rev. Flake's responses represent that two things can be said and both be the truth and accurate at the same time.. One comment does not have to be negated because there are differing opinions represented here.

Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry chimed in and said,

> "As the oldest one on this call, We've raised a generation after us, especially after 1965, to make them think that they were privileged because Civil Rights had come about, new laws, new rules than I could growing up in the Jim Crow segregated South. Rev. Baker, it is incumbent upon you to say that we don't need to fight each other, we need to grow this together. If you spend time fighting each other, you won't get anything done."

During this discourse, one is able to see the delineation between the opinions of the younger generation (Millennial and Gen X) versus those of the seasoned generation (Boomer I

and Post War). We cannot expect to affect change if there is no common ground that we can unite around.

Rev. Babydoll Kennedy a participant who is on the cusp of the Millennial and Gen X generations said,

> "We hear people talking about the number of women being ordained, the number of women being in position, my issue is, when we put more women in certain positions, are we just putting women in positions, or are we putting the right women? We have a lot of women in positions, but we've not really made much progress. Are we putting women in place who have that same patriarchal, misogynistic mindset? When we look at the delegation at the General Conference, we have a whole lot of women who don't vote for women."

Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford, who is our president for Commission on Women In Ministry immediately chimed in and said, "Actually, the majority of the women in the delegation are not clergywomen, the majority are laywomen." Dr. Crawford's comment helps to emphasize the inquiry Rev. Kennedy was talking about women being in positions that have "that same patriarchal misogynistic mindset." The laywomen have the power to elect or reject clergywomen who run for elected offices at the General Conference such as Bishop for which there are 21 active Bishops and only two women serving actively. Bishop E. Anne Henning Byfield and Bishop Francine Brookins are two of the five female Bishops that have been elected in the history of the church. General Officers for which there are nine active positions, and only one woman, Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown is the Historiographer / Executive Director, Department of Research and Scholarship. or for Judicial Council for which there are 12 active seats and one seat

was vacated because of death, for a total of 13 seats. Of the active seats on the Council, women hold four seats and one of the four is an alternate position. When you review the numbers, it is obvious that the lay women in the delegation at General Conference are some of the detractors from WIM's progression.

Men Holding On To Power

The imbalance of power will be maintained until the ingrained patriarchal and misogynistic culture is challenged and chiseled away bit by bit. Change does not come easily, but when it comes, it is pronounced and immediately noticeable in an organization that has maintained a particular power dynamic for many years.

The church is supposed to be the organism that influences the world. We were once the institution through which politics took its cues and solicited support. Grassroots activists' movements began in the church until the founding of Black Lives Matter. The church has already started to trade places in its leadership with the world. Instead of leading the world, the world has begun to lead us. The social norms of the world influence us up to and including sexism, misogyny, and discrimination. Although the world's influence on the church is not viewed through a positive lens, the church must have a laser perspective of what is happening in the world to have ministry that meets the needs and solves people's problems.

There are instances in which the world's influence can benefit the church as it relates to gender equity. As in the case of the recent City Council election in St. Paul, Minnesota, in which an all-female council has been elected for the first time in the city's 170-year history, their chiseling began in 1956 when the first woman was elected to the St. Paul City Council. This

Council is much more reflective of the constituents that the City Councilwomen serve. At one point, approximately thirty years ago, St. Paul was considered the interracial marriage capital of the country. It is common for the districts in which these council people will be serving to have a plethora of ethnicities and races contained therein.

In the district in which the only African Methodist Episcopal church is located in the capital city of St. Paul, Minnesota, there are over fifty languages spoken in a ten-mile radius. The election of this most recent City Council reflects the diversity of the districts they serve. People serving in leadership in the African Methodist Episcopal Church should also reflect the demographics of the people that we are serving and those whom we are attempting to attract. It is conceivable to have all females serving in major positions that clergymen would customarily occupy. The trajectory of students entering the Board of Examiners would substantiate the possibility of a majority female or all-female leadership team in any capacity, because most of the preachers in the Board of Examiners pursuing higher education are female. The unspoken desire for men to maintain power and the threat of women occupying positions that have traditionally been afforded women is quite evident. The men who wield power attempt at all costs to ensure that the male clergy occupy and are offered coveted positions in ministry. This is a part of the culture that has been consistent and accepted in African Methodism.

Because the men were determined to hold on to power, that was intimidating enough, but some personal observations and experiences can be pretty discouraging. The Rev. Vivian Clarington, the Senior Pastor of St. Peter's AME Church in Decatur, Illinois, is its first female Pastor. Rev. Clarington served as the President for Women in Ministry for the Illinois Annual Conference for two years. Before pastoring in Illinois, she pastored in Detroit, Michigan, and served in politics for State Representative Artina Hardman from Detroit as the Chief of Staff and

Senior Faith Base Coordinator for six years; said this about the AME Church's complicity in condoning sexism, discrimination or misogyny, "Well, when I look over our Zion and I came to realize that it was prevalent, it was when we elected our first female Bishop. That really enlightened me to the position of the AME Church and its being complicit with sexism. It's a man's world, and we're still very far behind. We are just getting started on opening the gate a little bit wider, but we're not there in my opinion." She recalls a female guest preacher:

> "At the time she was a guest preacher at our church in Detroit, she was also expecting, and I saw some things back then. When she preached, they were not very receptive, in my opinion. This woman had just blown the roof off of the church, and all they could focus on was her pregnancy."

Rev. Dr. Ann Lightner Fuller, the retired Pastor of Mt. Calvary AME Church in Townsend, MD, and a woman credited with having accomplished and been bestowed with several firsts in her ministerial career. She was the first female to serve as President of the Baltimore Ministerial Alliance and the first female to preach the Annual sermon at the Baltimore Annual Conference at least three times under different episcopal leadership. She said, "Women have held some unusual titles because they usually stick with the men." Dr. Lightner Fuller indicated she served alongside Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, and women have not been elevated as much. She said, "Since I retired in 2017, I haven't seen women moving up. It's gone back to like that old boy's network, and the young boys are being given more opportunities than the young women." Rev. Dr. Lightner Fuller ran for Bishop in the AME Church in 2008 but was unfortunately not elected.

When she was asked question #19 on the survey, "...Why do you think there have only been five elected and consecrated Women In Ministry as Bishops in our 207-year history?" She said, "It is because there is always a dominant male group of bishops who, I believe, strongly dominate leaders who vote and impress their wills upon the voting delegates. In addition, the "old boy network continues to reach back for other men." Dr. Lightner Fuller was not appointed to a leading church but to a church that was raising $50,000 when she got there. When she retired, the church was raising over one million dollars. Bishop Brookins, who is now deceased, said to Dr. Lightner Fuller, "I'll let you build the church, but I'm not going to let you stay there, I'm not going to let you pay for it. I want you to go to Trinity, which was the second church in the Conference." She said,

> "I begged the Bishop and said please let me stay here and continue to do what God has called me to do. He said, Ohhhhhhh you don't need to be at the little bitty church, nobody can see your church. You preach all over the country and all over the world. Really, I was. I was named one of *Ebony*'s fifteen greatest female preachers in that little building. So, if I could say to the other women: Don't let little stop you honey, you go ahead and work in the little and God can do much with little."

Dr. Lightner Fuller's boldness and humility in God was so evident, and speaking with her allowed me to see why her gift kept making room for her. She had found favor with Almighty God. She kept giving honor and glory to God for all He had accomplished through her. She was able to magnify the cultural and subliminal ways that the brethren hold on to power and remind women of their place. Dr. Ann said that they had nowhere to promote her once she had begun to raise one million dollars. There was only one other church in the Conference that was raising

more money than Mt. Calvary and that was Bethel Baltimore where Bishop John R. Bryant then Bishop Frank M. Reid pastored. She was the second church in ranking in the Annual Conference, but they never changed the ranking of her church. She moved from the bottom of the conference roll to what was acknowledged as the third church on the conference roll. Bishop John told her that she had accomplished something that no other female pastor had done. She was pastoring a million-dollar church! Although she had accomplished all that she accomplished, she had a brother who was sexist enough to tell her that he was responsible for her being a delegate to the General Conference. To which Rev. Dr. Ann responded,

> "No, I was not aware of that. I thought it was the work that we had done, I didn't think it was you. I thought that it was because Mt. Calvary had moved from the bottom of the conference to the top." He never forgot that, and I didn't care. That's a part of it. They want you to think that you can't do anything without them, and if you just go along with them and whatever they're doing, carry their bags–it's not true. You can do it without doing that. I just believe if you trust God and do the work, God will give you the reward."

During the phone interview with Rev. Dr. Jo Ann Browning, the Co-Pastor of Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, MD, and the first Pastor's wife in the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to receive a Co-Pastor appointment from the Presiding Bishop, was interviewed. She responded affirmatively to the survey's third question which asked, "Have you ever witnessed less qualified male preachers obtaining opportunities or positions that could have been afforded more qualified female preachers?" She expounded on her response by stating,

> "When I came through ministry, there were eleven or fifteen of us that were getting ready to be ordained Itinerant Elders. Out of those eleven or fifteen of us,

> there were around four or five women. But there were only three of us that were getting ready to get our Masters of Divinity in May and the annual conference was in April. The other two women went out and started churches and both of them are retired now. But the brothers who were in that group, who did not even have MDivs, were given churches. So, I've seen that. Absolutely! People would distinguish the difference between my husband and me by calling me "Rev. Sister Browning." It is interesting that they chose this approach and did not consider referring to Rev. Grainger Browning as Rev. Brother Browning."

"I have also been the only female in the ministry context when I was appointed Co-Pastor at the time I was appointed in 1998," Dr. Browning said. Although her appointment was a historical appointment and the bold move reverberated throughout African Methodism when it happened, Co-Pastor Jo Ann endured sexist criticism outside of the church, and one of her male members came to her defense. Dr. Browning said,

> "I can remember early on in the original church, we weren't even in the new church, a brother calling me on his job, saying, Rev. Browning, they're on my job talking about you, and I will fight for you. They have a problem with you being in leadership. Being in a church where there is a woman in pastoral leadership. I just want you to know, I will fight for you. I told them I'm not going anywhere."

As Rev. Dr. Karen Anderson, the first female pastor appointed to First AME Church in Las Vegas, stated when asked question #9 on the survey which states, "Do you think that these discriminatory practices and feelings towards female preachers will dissipate in the years to come in the AME Church?" Dr. Anderson responded by saying, "Not unless we are intentional

to admit that we have a problem in our denomination." On one of the last two open-ended questions that Rev. Anderson answered on the survey, she recalls,

> "I had a bishop who would never address me as Reverend but always called me Sister. I also experienced the pastor I entered ministry under giving more attention to the male licentiates. He had regular meetings with them but did not provide guidance to me. I also witnessed the extreme opposition that my female Presiding Elder experienced after her appointment. My previous conference also had two years in which we had no female delegates to the General Conference because there were no women in 'top churches'."

Women Being Blocked From Positions of Power

When the respondents were asked question #10, *Have you ever been intimidated by the unfavorable attitudes of men towards you?* It was surprising to see that 42% of the participants gave an affirmative response. They indicated that they had been intimidated by the unfavorable attitudes of men towards them.

These women are very accomplished in their respective callings and ministries and are influential. They have held major leadership positions in their Annual Conferences, Episcopal Districts, and the Connectional Church. They have served as delegates to General Conferences; preached during Annual Conferences, Episcopal District , and Connectional meetings; and one has preached at the Hampton Ministers Conference; and in four of the five instances,these women were the first females to pastor their respective churches. But, they have been intimidated

by the unfavorable responses of men. What was it about this culture that made them feel intimidated by men?

The culture of intimidation is more deeply entrenched than anyone can see with the naked eye. If one is not aware of the culture and how the power brokers operate, this practice could evade them, and they would be clueless about what exactly is transpiring. Rev Baker said,

> "Intimidation has happened most of my life, but the most traumatic is my ordination to become an Itinerant Elder. So, I was up for ordination to become an Itinerant Elder. Ordination was supposed to be in October;, the Annual Conference was in August. The Bishop asked me if I wanted to go to a church. I told him no; I don't feel called to be a Senior Pastor. This was after I had served one church as a Senior Pastor and supplied my father's church while he was in ICU. Neither the Bishop nor the elder called to check on me or to ask if I needed support. I really did not believe in a therapist until I became a Senior Pastor in the AME Church. Out of three hundred pastors at my Annual Conference, I was the youngest and would often be the only one to speak up when others wouldn't. I paid the annual budget for the church to which I was sent, and I was accused of not having paid my budget. It was reported that I made double the amount that I made. When I showed up to the Ministerial Efficiency Committee, I had bank statements and receipts, and they indicated that they did not need those items. I was told that the money I paid for my budget was applied to the previous pastor's debt, who was a male, and I had not paid the budget for the present year. So, in my first year of pastoring, I was sent to the Ministerial Efficiency Committee, and I was not allowed to report on the Annual Conference floor. They retaliated by

> not allowing me to report, and then they took my father's name off the delegate's list for General Conference, bumping him to alternate, and told him that he can't control his daughter. I called a female Bishop for advice because I thought I was going to explode. I was told to get my things and leave the Conference immediately."

This watch woman who dared to sound the trumpet as my youngest participant, a millennial, a single mother, a daughter of God, who has a standard of righteousness and no fear, experienced misogyny, sexism, patriarchy, and discrimination simultaneously. The dislike and disdain exhibited towards her because she did not remain silent and dared to ask the tough questions. They ostracized her for challenging the system. The sexism was very evident when they told her father that "he could not control his daughter." Rev. Baker is a grown woman, but their stereotypical mindset about gender roles made them believe that it was her father's duty to handle and control her. The patriarchal attitude in leadership emphasized to her and her father that they were not in control and that the culture and the system would not be challenged! Rev. Baker and her father experienced extreme discrimination because he was penalized for supporting his daughter and not acquiescing to the culture in the denomination. The good "company folks" did not experience any problems or backlash. Rev. Baker said that she does not feel that our system is a good one because "The language is vague and ambiguous. We operate off of culture and not conduct."

A Lead Pastor in the area asked Rev. Kabrielle Baker to pastor another church because they needed a strong Lead Pastor and she said, "I dare you sit across from me making $80,000 and my Pastor makes $100,000 and I'm walking with a DMin next year and both of y'all have master's, I think not." The interviewer asked, "What was their response to you, Rev. Baker?"

She responded, “They said that I was prideful, and I did not know about working hard and doing well.” She then said, “This isn’t about pride, this is about qualifications. The Baptist Church is offering me $80,000. It's not about money, it’s about value. If I’m not valued here, I’m going to go where God sends me.” Rev. Baker is a preacher’s kid (PK) who has a father who pastors. She admitted that she did not see the relevance of the Commission on Women In Ministry until she left her home Episcopal District and went to serve as Executive Pastor in another Episcopal District. She said, “I thought he [her father] was keeping me close because he did not trust me, but I now see that he kept me so close because he was protecting me. Because now I call him all of the time. The first time I called him crying he said welcome to the A.M.E. Church.”

Rev. Baker was asked to go to a church that could pay her $26,000 and was five hours away from where she was serving. She said, “No disrespect Bishop, but I’m tired of you all rewarding women with more struggle for a job well done.”

Rev. Dr. Jessica Ingram was asked, “Do you think that there is a good old’ boy network in place for men although they are becoming the minority in the Board of Examiners?” She said,

> “Oh sure. Without a doubt. It is still the case when it comes to certain appointments and so-called connectional churches, women’s names are not even put out there. At St. Philip AME Church in Atlanta, there was no woman whose name was included in the dialog for being appointed there. Since we are recording, I will put it on record. The reason the Greater Allen Cathedral, the largest AME Church, has a female pastor is because of my husband and because of me saying to him have you considered Elaine? Gregory Ingram officially made Elaine Flake Co-Pastor at his first annual conference. Eventually, I said to Bishop

> that he should go ahead and appoint Elaine. He believed in her ability. But I'll go back, the sexism is still there. There have been some appointments made in the 4th District where women were appointed to leading churches. As it relates to the election of Bishops, in the past, they have decided how many women will be elected or if any women will be elected. In 2012, they decided they were not electing a woman, and they didn't. It's going to change now, because again, because of the number of women and it's changing because in the past women were not delegates. It was unusual for a woman to be a delegate to the General Conference. But now you've got more women's votes. What happened in 2021 when Bishop Francine was elected, they did a bullet vote. Women are getting savvy, where they only voted for her."

Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry is a retired Bishop who was the second elected and consecrated female Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and was the first woman to be ordained an Itinerant in the Southern California Annual Conference's history. She is the first female Presiding Elder in the 5th Episcopal District of the AME Church and an original founder of the Committee for Women In Ministry and the Commission for Women In Ministry and served as the President for the Connectional Women In Ministry for four years. She indicated that, "Women in Ministry was not organized to fight the brothers, we were organized to elevate the sisters." She responded to question #1 on the survey affirmatively which asks, "Do you believe the A.M.E. Church has been complicit in condoning sexism, discrimination, or misogyny? She said,

> "I don't think it's intentional, I think it's traditional. Men had traditionally always been there. More and more I see the Bishops on the bench becoming more aware

> that they need to put women on these committees, to recognize the abilities of women." Bishop Guidry disclosed a very enlightening story about her experience of either being blocked from her newly appointed position of power and/or the traditional manner in which business was conducted in this male dominated culture. I was the only female Presiding Elder that Bishop Anderson appointed. There had never been a female in the 5th Episcopal District. Shortly after I was appointed, the Bishop was walking with the Presiding Elders into another area. As we were walking with the Bishop, he was talking and giving us instructions, and the brothers got to the bathroom, including the Bishop and they went into the men's room. The Bishop was still talking to the Presiding Elders about the information he wanted us to have. When they went into the men's room, I went with them. When we entered the men's room the Bishop looked around and said, 'Girl this is the men's room.' I said Bishop, you are still talking to the Presiding Elders and I'm an Elder, so I need to hear what you are saying. The Bishop said, 'I'll stop talking. Get out of here.' I stood by the door, and he didn't talk anymore until he came out of the men's room."

The vicious cycle of excluding women has been documented solely by the Executive Board of the Commission on Women In Ministry (WIM). Unfortunately, the following information is not officially documented in the Chief Information Officer's office of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Still, WIM deemed it necessary report the following statistics from 17 of the 20 Episcopal Districts. With more women entering into ministry and serving on the Board of Examiners, it is absolutely necessary to document these statistics to ensure that our

leadership positions and delegates to the General Conference are reflective of the individuals who are entering the ministry in the denomination.

Why Do We STILL Need WIM?[48]

Because in 2016 as part of our commitment to justice, AME/WIM surveyed its membership, both male and female. Data from seventeen of the 20 Episcopal Districts revealed the following:

- 65% of Episcopal District Finance Committees have no female clergy members
- 97% of Annual Conference Finance Committees are chaired by male clergy
- 88% of Annual Conference Trustee Boards are chaired by male clergy
- 71% of Annual Conference Trustee Boards have no female clergy members
- 87% of Annual Conference Board of Examiners are chaired by male clergy
- 78% of Annual Conference Ministerial Efficiency Committees are chaired by male clergy
- 69% of Deans of the Annual Conference Ministerial Institute are male clergy
- 69% of Annual Conferences have all male Presiding Elders
- 76% of "#1 churches" in Presiding Elder Districts have male clergy
- 83% of Chairs of the Committee on Ministerial orders are chaired by male clergy

The above statistics are quite revealing. Finances, education of ministerial candidates, authority over properties, and pastoring opportunities are dominated by male clergy. Even with the shift in the numbers of ministerial candidates entering the Board of Examiners, going to school to get

[48] Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford , 2016-2021 AME/WIM General Conference Quadrennial Report,

trained and graduating from seminary being overwhelmingly more women, the men are maintaining control in a system that is hesitant at best and fears at worst, females being in control.

Connectional Analysis of Women in Ministry and Patriarchy

When speaking with Rev. Dr. Erika Crawford, she celebrated the project including the word patriarchal in its title, and said,

> "The thing that caught my attention is that you called it what it is. We like to name stuff, not to be offensive, we like to name stuff so that people don't feel bad, but the reality is it's a patriarchal system. But the truth of the matter is Christianity was set up as a patriarchal system. So, I was drawn to it by the fact you made an honest, upfront, frank, unapologetic statement from the very beginning. It is not just about the fact that you have not been nice to women, but you have set up a system that was intended to exclude women, because it is a patriarchal system. Whether it was intentional or cultural, it is factual."

Dr. Crawford also stated,

> "If we look at the history of the AME Church, even from the call of Jarena Lee. Bishop Allen said that there's no place in the Discipline that gives room for a woman to preach. So, we know from the very beginning that the system was set up not to include women. So, we have seen the rolling out of that in multiple places. We saw it with the revocation of ordination, we've seen it when ordination came before the General Conference six times before they finally voted to have

> women ordained. We saw it when Rev. Perry Thomas Cooper ran for Bishop, I think she ran six times before she left the door open, and Bishop McKenzie was able to be elected. We see it now when we look at the election of the episcopacy and people say to us, "which woman" do you want to elect? But nobody ever asks the question, "which man" do you want to elect? We see it. Some of it is just cultural and because people have been born into it they don't challenge the system, but indeed it is set up as a patriarchal system and very few people have challenged the system. We even look at our Stewardess Board that was developed because they didn't want women on the Steward Board."

The Connectional Women In Ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1996. When I consulted previously published books of The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, it was interesting to observe the evolution of the emphasis placed on Women In Ministry. For instance, in the 1996 edition of The Doctrine and Discipline, two pages are dedicated to Women In Ministry with a typo in the index for where the information can be found. In the 2000 edition of The Doctrine and Discipline, eight pages are dedicated to Women In Ministry, emphasizing the mission, objectives, organization, and committees. In 2004, additional information was added as articles regarding accounts and investments. In 2008, information was added pertaining to the hierarchical structure at Episcopal District levels, with presidents from each district being represented. The structure of WIM (Women In Ministry) is beginning to operate like an organization with a voice and power that can be wielded in a voting bloc, so more attention is being emphasized on this organization. In the bicentennial edition of The Doctrine Discipline of the AME Church in 2016, there was a condensing of the size of the book and the information contained therein. On page 235, the

Commission on Women in Ministry is listed as the second Commission with a one paragraph description that occupies less than one fourth of the page. The other eight Commissions listed: Commission on Health; Commission on Social Action; Christian Debutante-Master Commission (CDMC); Commission on Chaplains; Commission on Ministry and Recruitment; Commission on Financial Management Program; Commission on Global Development; and Commission on Seminaries, Universities, Colleges, and Schools (Higher Education), all listed descriptions that are a minimum of two paragraphs and often occupy more than one page. What is listed for the Commission on Women in Ministry is, "The Commission on Women in Ministry shall support AME/WIM in furthering its mission to validate, support, enhance and expand the presence of women in ministry in the AME Church, and shall assist AME/WIM in meeting its stated objectives. It shall encourage the leadership and membership of the AME Church to create increased opportunities for women in ministry to participate fully in the life and ministry of the AME Church."[49]

A Womanist Theologian & Homiletician Speaks

The African Methodist Episcopal Church is noted for many firsts. This Womanist Theologian, Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown, is one of three women in the 207-year history of the church who has served as an elected General Officer in the church and is a sought-after preacher, teacher, presenter, and theologian in and outside of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown works in both the church and the academy. The Associate Academic Dean in the Bandy Professor Preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory

[49] African Methodist Episcopal Church. *The Doctrine,* 235.

University, Atlanta, GA. In the AME Church, she has been in ministry since 1982, has been a member of Women In Ministry since its inception, and since 1996 has been a consultant. She is a General Officer in the AME Church and serves as the Historiographer/Executive Director of the Department of Research and Scholarship for the Connectional A.M.E. Church. She is also an editor for the AME Review.

Dr. Fry Brown was one of my thirteen participants for my project, and the interview I conducted with her was enlightening, transparent, illuminating, and heartfelt. The contribution of one who teaches on Womanist topics, issues, and concerns empowers women to embrace all of their womanism and their place in society and to travel the journey of pain and, in some instances, devastation that she has experienced as a woman in ministry. I marvel at her determination to ensure that women in generations behind her will be equipped and empowered to confront these enemy forces and eventually succeed at dismantling their existence in God's church.

I asked Dr. Fry Brown questions from the 20-question survey given to all participants.

Sharon Moore:

Do you believe the A.M.E. Church has been complicit in condoning sexism, discrimination, or misogyny?

Rev. Dr. Fry Brown:

I don't think that it is the church that has been complicit in condoning sexism, misogyny, and discrimination. I think there's leadership and members of the church who are complicit. Misogyny and discrimination are a power dynamic. I believe there are people in the church that fear that they have less than what women have to offer, and it's their problem, but we're the focus. It's one thing to say that we are the Church of Allen, and we are the liberators and believe in equality, and then the barrier is erected that says women keep out, and you can't do anything else but serve tea and take care of the children. That's at all levels of the church and there are members of the church who are very open and affirming and supportive of women in ministry and some who have lost pulpits because they have allowed and invited women to preach over time. So, it's a both and kind of thing.

Sharon Moore:

Have you ever witnessed less qualified male preachers obtaining opportunities or positions that could have been afforded more qualified female preachers?

Rev. Dr. Fry Brown:

Unfortunately, every time there's a surge of women in leadership and women doing things, it's kind of like national politics and they get more afraid and raise the barriers to keep the next group of women out. Then all of their maleness and penal power comes out and they start

manipulating systems so that women can't get in things. So, it's not the whole church, but there's leadership in the church that certainly does that.

Sharon Moore:

Have you experienced discrimination or mistreatment from other females in the A.M.E. Church?

Rev. Dr. Fry Brown:

Yes. My answers are going to be short and succinct.

Sharon Moore:

Are you more surprised at men's attitudes or that some women are guilty of mistreatment and discrimination?

Rev. Dr. Fry Brown:

When I first entered ministry in 1982, there were women who were more vicious toward me and critiquing me. My first husband divorced me because I was going into ministry. There were women who said that my daughter would wind up on the street barefoot and pregnant by 16 because I was doing the 'man thing.' There were women who thought because I was in the inner sanctum with the pastor, that I had to be sleeping with the pastor. They were critiquing my hair, my body, my motherhood, and even today, I think that there is still some sexual surrogacy going on. Because the percentage of women that make up the church being 75% to 95% of the local

churches, they refer to the male pastor as their children's surrogate father. I have had a woman say to me before you could never be my pastor because I would never marry a woman. They construct these ideal family situations in their minds where they think that the male leadership has now taken the place of who they would have been married to, and women interrupt that. The easiest thing is to call a woman a lesbian. The charge against me was that I was trying to take power from men, I hated men, I was a lesbian, I was doing things against God and that I would pay for it. When we are married, our husbands are critiqued. Why would you be married to a woman who is in ministry? There were four women at the church who used to walk out and turn their chairs whenever I'd pray or do anything. I was caught off-guard by the women who rejected me. That devastated me. Even before going into ministry, there were men who were sexist. I was used to that. I grew up with boys, so I knew how to fight against that. But I was caught off guard by women who told me I shouldn't be doing something as the woman. That devastated me! I grew up with these women in my family who always told me I could do everything. Whatever God said I could do, I could do—My grandmother, my mother, my aunts. Then, I get in a church where they are supposed to love Jesus, and it's the women that are saying, you know God didn't talk to you. You are stealing your husband's ordination. That was more painful. Even today, after 42 years in ministry, I'm still blindsided sometimes by women who say, 'Why do you have a chance to preach?' or women who say, 'What are you trying to do?' It's 2023.

The fluidly of this conversation took a life of its own. There was dialogue and a purging that appeared to be taking place, and I was positioning myself for the outpour. The conversation transitioned to speaking about the labels men placed on female preachers when they didn't have

a box to put them in. This is especially evident when one is perceived to have had some successes in ministry, and the powers that be are always wondering, "Where does her strength come from; what's the secret?"

Rev. Dr. Fry Brown:

Sometimes, they forget that I am a Black woman in the Academy and in the Church. I hear what they say about Black women. I purposely did not sleep my way to the top. The consequence of not doing that was being told no when I wanted to start a church. It happened three times! Two times in Colorado and once in Georgia. The first time I was told I would take members away from the other three churches in Denver. But, if I did so-in-so with this Pastor or this Presiding Elder, then I could get the church. So, I didn't get the church. That happened two different times. While in Georgia, there was pressure for favors, and I was told, you think you're too smart, you have too many gifts, you went to a white school, you teach at a white school, and we're going to make it hard for you to do anything in ministry. They said that's what women had to do. I purposely do not hang places with people because people will make up stuff about you, but I never want it to be true.

The conversation then shifted to discussing how women compromise their womanism to be accepted by their male colleagues. We discussed cultural norms that are not necessary to engage if God has ordained a specific place and space for you.

Rev. Dr. Fry Brown:

The structure is inherently supremacist. It's baked into our structure, and anytime you try to go against it, then you're castigated as somebody who is trying to destroy the AME Church. The women fall into the good old boys club, and they reproduce what has kept us out of spaces in the first place. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, and some women betrayed women in ministry for less than $30, because they think they are going to get a title. But they don't think about the cost of that. So, when things fall apart, the first thing they want to do is run to other women who they have stepped on. Sisterhood does not need to be on the front porch telling all of your business. The system is hierarchal, which means you step on people on the way up.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will discuss the limitations encountered while conducting research and writing this project. It will also engage the implications of who, what, where, when, why, and how various leaders and other individuals can address and provide solutions for dismantling the challenges that women in ministry face daily in the African Methodist Episcopal Church's patriarchal culture that is so deeply entrenched. Other information will be included in this chapter that will aid in illuminating the disparity in opportunities for female preachers versus the leadership positions that evade them and analysis that was submitted by the Executive Board of the Connectional Women In Ministry (WIM) to strengthen the foundation and plan for additional vision casting that will agitate the present paradigm to ensure more opportunities for female preachers. The interviewer's ministerial competencies will be included in this chapter and a desired forecasting of future research and organizational direction.

Limitations

The most glaring limitation encountered with this project was a lack of information and statistics accessible through the Chief Information Officer's office. No data was available concerning Connectional Women In Ministry nor were statistics for the accurate number of female preachers in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. All statistics presented in this

project were the result of the diligent effort of our Executive Board of Women In Ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, working collaboratively with the Episcopal District Presidents of Women In Ministry and working with their Annual Conference Coordinators to get accurate statistics and compile them for an international statistical snapshot.

Another disappointing limitation was exposed while collecting the statistics for the Commission on Women In Ministry. There are 5,113 women in ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church that could be counted. Four of the Districts did not or could not report the number of Women In Ministry, so the number could actually be higher. Of the 5,113 who have been counted, only 1,950 are dues-paying WIM members, which is only 38%. Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry said, "In 1995, we started a WIM Committee, and then in 1996 it became a Commission of the church. We have an organization in the AME Church that could advocate for women. I think Dr. Erika has tried to do some stuff since she's been president, but she needs more support. She probably needs some of you on this panel and women across the church who are in ministry to become a part of WIM so that we can advocate for women across the church. That's an organization where we can be one voice. It was the committee as one voice that got the church to allow us to be a Commission. "

This Commission began at the very end of the 20th century. Unfortunately, some men were intimidated by its formation because some felt that it would compromise opportunities they were customarily securing. It would threaten their comfortability in the spectrum of gender privilege. Bishop Guidry said, "Some men still tell women not to join that group because they are just out there to fight the brothers. We're not trying to fight against anybody. We are just trying to fight for our right to be where God has called us to be. The stronger the organization is, the more powerful our voice is."

Although we have a total of 20 Episcopal Districts, my project participants were:

1. All located in the continental United States.
2. All were born in the United States
3. All of my participants were African American
4. The Number of Participants was only thirteen, including my Cohort Activist.
5. There were no Participants from our Overseas Districts which include Western and Eastern Africa, South Africa, Northeast Africa, Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, Guyana/Suriname, Virgin Islands, Winward Islands, Europe, Canada, India, Bermuda

The Participants for this project are women in ministry in the continental A.M.E. Church whom I knew were powerful leaders in their own right. They would not be apprehensive about disclosing information regarding their journey in African Methodism. These participants are rooted in their respective callings and assignments and would not fear the possibility of vengeance from the church hierarchy. These women were truth bearers who did not feel obligated to be politically correct to maintain a false perception of equality. These women did not feel obligated to sanitize embarrassing and unfortunate truths about their experiences of patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, and discrimination in the AME Church. The interviewer did not want to waste time interviewing anyone who was not completely brave, completely bold, completely transparent, and unapologetic for being a truth bearer about the growing edge areas of the African Methodist Episcopal Church's culture and systemic biases toward female preachers. The denomination, unfortunately, appears to preoccupy itself with its image and narratives about it instead of attempting to remedy the genuine concerns of sexism, misogyny, patriarchy, and discrimination.

All of the participants interviewed in a formal pre-planned status were female, but one Bishop provided a statement. After his presentation to Women In Ministry, I asked if I could quote him on this project, and he affirmed my request and permitted me to do so. While attending the Connectional WIM Quadrennial in Detroit Michigan on August 4, 2022, Bishop Fred A. Wright, the 142nd Elected and Consecrated Bishop of the AME Church and the Commission Chair for Women In Ministry, the son of a Woman In Ministry, Rev. Cornelia Wright, who was the first female Presiding Elder in the AME Church in the United States, was speaking to the WIM group, and posed questions to WIM—"Where are you? The state that you're in now, is it satisfying to you? Are you frustrated? Are you being taken for granted? Do you know where you are? When people ask you where you are, you try to find a landmark in your surroundings to help you identify where you are. If you know where you're going, if you know where you are, you must move beyond your limitations. The last word is PURSUE! What you pursue defines what you are entitled to possess. You're not entitled to possess or access what you don't have the guts to pursue. Those who pursue nothing will possess nothing." Bishop Wright's presentation was powerful and motivating. Still, the main limitation is that it is perceived that he is in the minority within the ranks of the episcopacy with his sentiment, support, and encouragement of WIM. Bishop Wright can see through a different prism because of his legacy mother, who dealt with trailblazing as a woman in ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and possibly provides heightened sensitivity in his spirit for women in ministry.

There were also no laity participants in this project because my focus was on the female preacher and her experiences regarding misogyny, sexism, patriarchy, and discrimination in the

AME Church. In any subsequent work on this project, the inclusion of laity will be strongly considered.

The youngest participant in this group was a millennial in her 30s who will receive her doctorate in ministry degree during Spring 2024 and has pastored in the AME Church. There were no teen participants or individuals in their 20s because the experiential aspect of pastoring was a significant focus for this project. Most individuals in this younger demographic would not be able to engage or provide that criterion.

All of the participants were college-educated with postgraduate work. This could be viewed as a limitation to readers of this project because most individuals living in the United States are not college educated. As of the 2022 census, 37.7% of Americans have college degrees, leaving the overwhelming majority, 62.3%, non-college-educated.

The conversations during my interview time with each participant one-on-one and the group interview were so fluid that no intentional interrogation of the family structure was discussed; although two participants voluntarily mentioned some of the challenges they experienced while furthering their education while raising children, this subject was not emphasized in most dialogue I had with the preachers.

Although all of the participants in this project are Black and U.S.-born, I do not only view it as a limitation but also as an incomplete task. Though miniscule, we do have some ordained white African Methodists Episcopal preachers in the continental U.S. and our overseas districts. Having their input on challenges facing these female preachers and gaining insight on some of the discrimination that they may have to endure because they are racial minorities in our denomination would be a valuable insight for my future work in this area.

Another limitation is the slow process of submitting legislation to transition out of the Revisions Committee and making it to the floor for a vote. The Revisions Committee is still more than 80% male, and this gender disparity is the suspected reason for WIM's legislation consistently being stalled in the Revisions Committee. Another layered disadvantage is that the Revisions Committee is never obligated to explain proposed legislation not being passed from that committee to the floor for a vote. In these instances, the formulators of the legislation have no way of knowing what should or should not be revised for resubmission and review for passage.

A Prescription for Addressing Patriarchy in the AME Church

As statistical data is collected and compiled, the Connectional WIM By-Laws should indicate a specific expectation for the frequency with which this data is collected and the secure place to house and archive the data. Connectional WIM should develop a suggestion for communicating with Annual Conference secretaries through the Episcopal District Executive Boards to collect ministerial statistics and statuses of female clergy to update and purge the statistical data that will be housed.

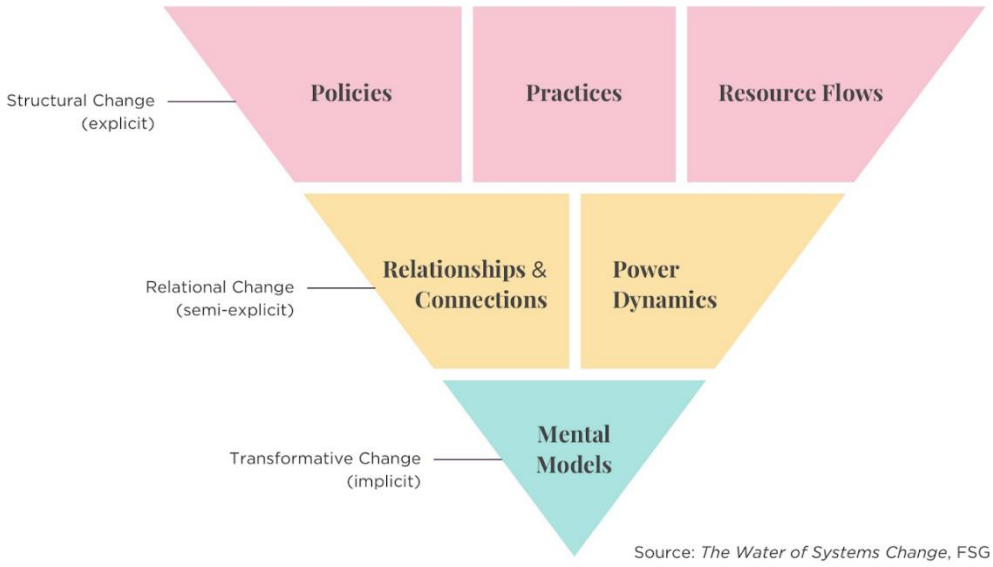
The Connection WIM President can communicate specific targets for an Annual Conference year and ensure that one of the targets includes a teaching moment from the Episcopal District leadership about those stats of Women In Ministry and the best way to approach voting during Annual Conferences and how to navigate the politics of the church, but don't consent to it.

The WIM President of each Episcopal District should be intentional about forging open communication with the Bishop of the District and request opportunities for ministry and

teaching for WIM at Annual Conferences, Planning Meetings, and Christian Education Conferences.

A legislative engagement is the traditional way to ensure that people respect the impact and the powerful stakeholders that the preachers of WIM are in the African Methodist Episcopal Church's existence and organization. However, some work would also need to be done regarding systemic change. The following chart will emphasize ideas and thoughts about systemic change.

Six Conditions That Hold Systemic Problems In Place



In the culmination Zoom forum with all participants, Rev. Yulise Waters, Esq., introduced this published graph/chart and challenged us Women In Ministry to consider its use for addressing the challenges that Women In Ministry has within the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. The following are approaches and models that can be instituted and propagated throughout the various levels of leadership in the church, such as the local church

level, the Presiding Elder level, and the Episcopal level, for the necessary systemic change to manifest across the connection. When we talk about changing systems, there are six conditions listed in the above chart that push and cause systemic change: Mental Models, Relationships and Connections, Power Dynamics, Policies, Practices, and Resource Flows.

How AME/WIM Can Utilize The Chart For Systemic Change

1. **Mental Model**: At the very base of this graph are the mental models like education. We need to engage in a reeducation to the AME Church and remind them of the purpose of WIM, why it was initiated, and why it is needed. This can aid in changing the narrative about WIM.
2. **Relationships and Connections**: There is so much power in the relationships and connections in WIM. If we can strengthen those bonds and make certain that everyone has the same goal and we are speaking with one voice, we can then impact the next part of the graph–Power Dynamics.
3. **Power Dynamics:** There is no power in disunity, thus the reason for emphasizing in *Relationships and Connections* the necessity of speaking with one voice. Power is wielded in unity, preparation, and presence.
4. **Policies:** Policies will not be accepted and affect change if there is not an amalgamation of Mental Model, Relationships and Connections, and Power Dynamics.
5. **Practices**: Practices will be instituted at the local church level, the Presiding Elder level, and the Episcopal level. The practices do not have to be laws of the church to be instituted and practiced at each level.

6. **Resource Flows**: The resource flow is not only limited to money but would also incorporate appointments to established and influential congregations that can pay a full-time salary; being elected as delegates to the General Conference; being appointed to positions at the Presiding Elder and Episcopal levels of ministry that have traditionally been held by men.

Earlier in this chapter, Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry said, "Some men still tell women not to join that group because they are just out there to fight the brothers." When we engage the mental model and reeducate the church to reiterate the purpose of WIM and the reason for its formation, we can begin dismantling this inaccurate oral tradition that some have unfortunately embraced.

Given the number of people who are coming into the Board of Examiners, being overwhelmingly female, it is incumbent upon every level of the AME Church to address the callings, giftings, and needs in a way that has not been don. However, there has been a recognized need for it by the creation of Women In Ministry as a Commission in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Pastors must intentionally support and encourage women on their ministerial staff to join the Commission on Women In Ministry. Presiding Elders need to encourage Pastors to incorporate women in ministry in leadership at the local church level and to utilize Women In Ministry for critical functions at the Presiding Elder level, such as the Finance Committee, Committee on Ministerial Orders, and afford opportunities for workshops and plenary presentations on critical issues such as education, finance, real estate, and technology. At the Bishop's level, he or she should incorporate the suggestions for the Presiding Elder level and create equitable platforms for pastoral appointments and voting delegate elections. While thoroughly engaging, instituting, practicing, and studying the *Six Conditions That Hold Systemic*

Problems In Place, we can introduce legislation that will aid in the voice of WIM being heard and taken more seriously at leadership levels. The following is the Proposed Legislation for the AME General Conference.

Proposed Legislation To AME General Conference

The following document is a formatted document for submitting legislation to the AME General Conference for passing into law of the church. The amendment to an original document, which has already been passed into law in the church, now includes seats at the General Conference for AME Women In Ministry to provide parity in representation based upon the demographics in the denomination. Because this legislation is simply amending previously passed legislation, we hope it is more likely to transition from the Revisions Committee referenced in Chapter 1 of this project and more likely to get to the floor of the General Conference for a vote. Women In Ministry is not in competition with the other components listed in the legislation; we are desirous to be a coalition with other marginalized groups mentioned in this bill.

The 4-digit numbers on the document are simply line numbers related to the legislation listed on the official form for legislation submission. If any discussion takes place on the Conference floor, the area of the legislation is easily accessible by referencing specific line numbers. Each bolded header on the legislative document is self-explanatory. Line 1390 directs the reader to the specific page reference on Line 1391 in the official document of law for the African Methodist Episcopal Church, The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The intent listed on Line 1392 is explained on Line 1393. The rationale listed

on Line 1394 is said on Line 1395. The Current Text listed in Line 1396 is explained in lines 1397-1410. It is the actual official legislation that is presently listed in the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The amended text listed in Lines 1411-1427 incorporates the amendments submitted for an upcoming General Conference for passage into law.

Title: General Conference Composition
Submitted By: Sharon D. Moore for Connectional Women In Ministry
Email: RevSmoore8@gmail.com

Page Reference in Current AME Discipline

Page 370, Part XIV Section I A

Intent

To bring fair representation of Connectional components

Rationale

To adjust the disparity among Connectional Components in the General Conference Composition

Current Text

The composition of the General Conference shall be the bishops; the general officers elected by the General Conference; the General Secretary/CIO of the General Conference; the presidents of the universities and colleges; the deans of seminaries that have been in operation continuously for one (1) or more years prior to the General Conference; the president and treasurer of the Women's Missionary Society; the editor of the Women's Missionary Magazine; the director of the Young People's and Children's Division; the

Connectional presidents of Women In Ministry (WIM), Richard Allen Young Adult Council (RAYAC), Young People's and Children's Division (YPD) and Lay Organization; Episcopal District Lay Presidents; the president of the Connectional Council; the Executive Director and Medical Director of the Health Commission; active-duty military and veterans administration chaplains who have been ordained for at least four (4) years preceding the General Conference and those who are retired with a minimum of twenty (20) years of service in the Armed Forces of the United States; former World War II Chaplains who are in good and regular standing their annual conferences; the administrators of all Connectional institutions (i.e., Douglas Hospital); the President of the Connectional Presiding Elders Council, and elected clergy and lay delegates from each annual conference.

Amended Text

The composition of the General Conference shall be the bishops; the general officers elected by the General Conference; the General Secretary/CIO of the General Conference; the presidents of the universities and colleges; the deans of seminaries that have been in operation continuously for one (1) or more years before the General Conference; the president and treasurer of the Women's Missionary Society; the editor of the Women's Missionary Magazine; the director of the Young People's and Children's Division; the Connectional presidents of Women In Ministry (WIM), the Central Southern Africa Coordinator of WIM, the Episcopal District WIM Presidents Richard Allen Young Adult Council (RAYAC) and one at large seat; Young People's and Children's Division (YPD) and Lay Organization.

Episcopal District Lay Presidents; the president of the Connectional Council; the Executive Director and Medical Director of the Health Commission; active-duty military and veterans

1422 administration chaplains who have been ordained for at least four (4) years preceding the General
1423 Conference and those who are retired with a minimum of twenty (20) years of service in the
1424 Armed Forces of the United States; former World War II Chaplains who are in good and regular
1425 standing their annual conferences; the administrators of all Connectional institutions (i.e.,
1426 Douglas Hospital); the President of the Connectional Presiding Elders Council, and elected
1427 clergy and laity delegates from each annual conference shall include a minimum of two (2) delegates who
are members of RAYAC.

The main amendment to this legislation was a request for all Episcopal District WIM Presidents to be seated as delegates, as are the Episcopal District Lay Presidents.

Ministerial Competencies

When I met with the Site Team, they agreed that based upon the interactions they had already had with me and my approach to the subject matter, the Ministerial Competencies of Spiritual Leader and Administrator should continue. At the same time, the Professional Competency requires further development. As a Spiritual Leader, one must understand the necessity of selfless service to others and oneself. The Spiritual Leader has nothing to offer others if she is not first replenished, revived, and renewed in her spirit through intentional engagement that will cultivate that spiritual necessity.

Spiritual Leader

Ministers are spiritual leaders of the community. As such, they are expected to be able to communicate effectively with others' spiritual presence and power. To do so, however, they must first, be themselves grounded in spiritual disciplines and regularly exercise personal spiritual practices. To this end, the Candidate:

- is familiar with the spiritual practices and background of their religious community or tradition
- sets an example in their observance of spiritual disciplines, including the ability
- to observe Sabbath rest, i.e., a regular time of retreat for spiritual refreshment and renewal
- is attentive to the spiritual journey of the ongoing relationship with God of both oneself and those in one's pastoral care
- is an effective spiritual guide to persons in their ongoing relationship with God.
- is effective in leading spiritual retreats, meetings, or services
- attends regularly or daily to spiritual discipline appropriate to their tradition
- seeks to grow in the knowledge of the spiritual practices of other times and traditions

The Team indicated that I was effective in these efforts. The candidate agreed with one caveat. There would need to be a more intentional effort to observe Sabbath rest. The leader must

remain spiritually and physically replenished to effectively orchestrate the liberation movement's vision for the women in ministry within the AME Church.

As it relates to the Administrator, I knew that I had the gift of administration after taking spiritual gifts tests and the work that I engage in and outside of the church. It was enlightening to know that others saw this gift in operation and there was no intention to display said competency or gift. Administrators are needed for movements. One must know the plan, grow the plan, and show the way of the plan. From a social justice perspective, this competency can be most advantageous.

Administrator

An administrator can define and analyze a task or problem succinctly and clearly, establish concrete and realistic goals, develop strategies that flow out of these goals, and initiate a clear, ongoing process of evaluation. She or he communicates a sense of mission which sees each task as part of the whole life of the congregation and establishes a collegial environment in which the gifts of others are expressed. Through it all, there is precision, accuracy, organization, and purpose. One senses that time is well spent, that efforts are not duplicated, and that efficiency is balanced against other competing factors. To this end, the Candidate demonstrates:

- clarity and succinctness in defining and analyzing a task or problem
- ability to establish concrete and realistic goals
- capacity to develop strategies that flow from these goals

- ability to evaluate achievements to decide the next steps
- ability to involve other persons in the process of decision-making
- ability to identify and make use of the personal and material resources of the congregation, organization, or community
- understanding of group processes and dynamics, and an ability to work with them
- ability to work to realize the mission of the whole through the various tasks that form its parts
- ability to handle details with precision and accuracy
- efficiency and organization
- ability to maintain effective lines of communication

The team provided complimentary feedback and said I was effective in this area. Although this is a gift and a competency in which I usually excel, I welcomed their positive analysis because there were times when I felt I was not operating effectively in this area due to the three major transitions in my life in 2022. I am experiencing revival in this area, and it was affirming to hear that others took notice of my reignition in this competency.

This Professional competency is one that gave me pause initially. In a traditional sense, I was guilty of relegating professionalism to corporate America. I consistently preach that in spiritual circles, especially the church, people need to comprehend that there is the business of the church and church business. The business of the church is souls; church business is the day-to-day operation of the church. Professionalism is required to engage this. I also preach in ministry that more than good is needed where excellence is required.

Professional

The professionalization of ministry is sometimes lamented, but when understood properly, the minister is a professional who realizes excellence in their calling. Among the skills that undergird the performance of ministry, those of the professional cannot be discounted. To this end the Candidate:

- demonstrates skill in written communication, and is able to express themself well in written work
- manages time well
- limits their workload to what is do-able, and is able to say "no" when that is warranted
- demonstrates a positive professional attitude toward self and others
- demonstrates appropriate professional behavior in relation to the workplace
- is dependable in the performance of tasks
- is open, honest, and personable in relations with people
- is a good listener and communicator.
- is able to deal constructively with conflict
- can discriminate between professional and personal relationships while attending to both
- practices self-care

The Site Team felt that I came to meetings prepared, my correspondence was succinct and professional, and I kept the lines of communication open throughout the process. A critique

from one member indicated that I was only sometimes successful at limiting my workload and that she was concerned about how many things I was juggling. I admitted that I was not practicing self-care this season at the level to which I had grown accustomed. The Site Team and I agree that although I was primarily effective in this area, I am still evolving.

Future Research and Organizational Direction

Future research for this project is mammoth. There are so many directions that one can pursue regarding Women In Ministry in the AME Church. Consideration would be given to the following categories:

- Women In Ministry married to preachers
- The impact on children with mothers in ministry
- Female Senior Pastors married to lay husbands
- Tenure of female pastors in rural 'non influential' churches compared to male colleagues

If the African Methodist Episcopal Church continues at the current trajectory of systemic misogyny, sexism and discrimination, this church that boasts being the first founded by people of African descent will not be existing to celebrate its tercentennial celebration.

Appendix A

Definition of Terms

Denominational and General Definitions of Terms*:*

AME-African Methodist Episcopal

Annual Conference- A designated area in the Episcopal District that is incorporated through the AME Church and is a legal and sovereign body and the entity of Methodist polity. This area can compromise one or more states. When the conference covers more than one state, the incorporation will be in the state of the largest membership.

Bishop- An ordained itinerant elder who is elected by the General Conference of a specific Quadrennial and is then consecrated for service in an Episcopal District.

Board of Examiners- The four-year denominational teaching process that each preacher engages in in addition to other schooling.. For a preacher to be ordained an itinerant deacon, the preacher must have an undergraduate degree. For a preacher to be ordained an itinerant elder, the preacher must have a master's of divinity or equivalent from a fully accredited seminary.

Connectional Church-The entire denomination represented in its thirty-nine countries and twenty Episcopal Districts

Denominational Lines-Separation of Christian churches and organizations by beliefs, principles, positions, attitudes, interests, religious sect, political party, etc.

Discrimination-Treatment of or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs.

Episcopal District- Geographical area over which an elected and consecrated Bishop has jurisdiction.

General Conference-The international Quadrennial gathering of all thirty-nine countries and twenty Episcopal Districts to conduct business, pass legislation, and elect people for service in various positions.

General Officers-Positions elected by the General Conference for service to the Connectional Church.

Inland Episcopal District-Thirteen geographical areas located in the continental United States

Ministerial Efficiency Committee- An Annual Conference committee responsible for oversight and suggestions for pastors related to issues in the pastoral charge. They are responsible for providing their suggestions to the presiding Bishop for action items for growth or restructuring.

Misogyny-Hatred, dislike, or mistrust of women, manifested in various forms such as physical intimidation and abuse, sexual harassment and rape, social shunning, and ostracism, etc.

Patriarchal-Characteristic of an entity, family, church, etc., controlled by men.

Presiding Elder- An ordained minister appointed by the Bishop to serve as overseer of churches in a designated area of the Episcopal District.

Sexism-Attitudes or behavior based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles.

Appendix B

2021-2024 AME Women In Ministry Quadrennial Goals

(From Commission on WIM Report to 51st Quadrennial Session of the AME Church 2021)

2021-2024 AME/WIM Quadrennial Goals The 2021-2024 Connectional AMEWIM Executive Board met virtually on Thursday, September 30, and Friday, October 1, 2021, for a transitional meeting. During the meeting under the leadership of the Connectional President, the Board undertook a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analysis.

A summary of the results is as follows: Upon review of the Analysis, the Board adopted the following as priorities for the 2021-2024 Quadrennium:

Strengths Experience (personal and professional)

Collective Power & Resources

Global Presence

Multiple Gifts

Creativity and Resourcefulness

Visionary change agents

Unified

Opportunities Communicate at every level

Capitalize on our momentum Make education/training accessible

Partner with Male Clergy-Colleagues	Develop a succession plan
Use organizational power	Mentor
Ecumenical Partnership	

Aspirations

See women in key leadership positions at every level of the church

Ensure Annual Conference Coordinators are the best the conference has to offer

Work on a succession plan for leadership in AMEWIM

Have an active AMEWIM in every Annual Conference of the AME Church

Create mentoring opportunities

Seek out emerging leaders

Results

Increased number of women in position of leadership at every level of the church Proportional increase of clergywomen in the General Conference

Strengthen Connectional, Commission, and Component relationships

Effect use of Technology – creation of a membership management system

Establishment of The Jarena Lee Continuing Education Institute under the Jarena Lee Foundation

Appendix C

What Is Gender Privilege?

(From Working & Moving Towards Gender Justice, Parity and Equality in the AME Church—Presented to Philadelphia District Conference)

What is Gender Privilege?

At the General Board meeting held in December 2016, the General Board voted to adopt a resolution on Gender Justice and Equality. The resolution, presented by the Commission on Women in Ministry, dealt with the collective commitment of the AME Church to confront issues around equity and gender justice in our churches, communities, and politics. This unanimously adopted resolution wasn't another invitation for us to say that there are gender injustices and disparities but rather was an invitation for us to give a serious reflection on how they impact the church and reflect our Christian witness.

Over the last 200 years, from the licensing of Jarena Lee in 1819 to the election of Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie in 2000, many have worked to move us progressively forward. However, we still find ourselves challenged by **cultural expectations, oppressive systems, and discriminative policies and protocols that work to sustain a hierarchy that places men in key positions of leadership, influence, and power. This is a privilege, more specifically male privilege.**

The origins of the term "privilege" can be traced back to the 1930s when W.E.B. DuBois wrote about the "psychological wage" which allowed whites to feel superior to Black people. Privilege comes in a myriad of forms including race, gender, wealth, physical fitness, safety, educational attainment, and height. However, the people who have those things are usually unaware of their power and influence.

Privilege, at its pith, is the advantage or benefit of an individual based solely on their social status. **It is not conferred upon a person as an individual but rather on a larger societal group, which may make it difficult for one to own their privilege. Privilege is about accommodations that work in your favor without you even asking. The challenge with privilege particularly in the church is that it o**ften requires that we conform or subscribe to a toxic norm that contradicts the gospel.

Benefiting from privilege doesn't make one a "bad person." According to Peggy McIntosh, an American feminist, anti-racist, and scholar, privilege may not be "the result of a concerted effort to oppress those of the opposite gender, however, the inherent benefits that males gain from the systemic bias put women at an innate disadvantage… The benefits of this unspoken privilege are often described as special provisions, tools, relationships, or various other opportunities." Thus, we must look circumspectly at how we as a community of faith work for gender justice in the same ways we are working for political justice, criminal justice, environmental justice, and economic justice.

If you've never given the concept of privilege any thought, we close by challenging you to look through a different lens with hopes that it will be a gateway for future dialogue. Change starts with awareness, and we hope that the examples below help lead to change.

Ten Examples of Privilege:

1. If I don't get the promotions, I can be reasonably sure that it's not because of my gender.
2. In my local church, you saw people in leadership like you.
3. I've never felt that I was put on a program or invited to a meeting just because they needed a "token" man.
4. I have the privilege of being unaware of my male privilege.
5. People have never assumed that I am the church secretary or the pastor's spouse.
6. I've never had to defend my call because of my gender.
7. I've never walked into a room and thought to count how many men were there.
8. I've been invited to preach for days other than gender days, e.g., Men's Day.
9. I can expect to see your gender *represented* at all levels of leadership in the church.
10. You don't have to take a special class to hear about your gender contribution.

Appendix D

Suggestions for Equity Thinking, Speech, and Actions

(From Working & Moving Towards Gender Justice, Parity and Equality in the AME Church—Presented to Philadelphia District Conference)

Now What?

As we continue to work to address three encumbrances facing clergywomen today; the **affirmation** of our call; **access** to information, resources, and seats of power, influence, and authority; and **advocacy,** identifying persons – male and female, clergy and lay--who are willing to be bold, intentional, and purposeful advocates. **So, what can you do to support the church's commitment to Gender Justice, Parity, and Equality?**

1. Stop saying we don't want a female pastor a. Have you used "man" or "men" or words containing them to refer to people who may not be men?

b. Have you used "he," "him," "his," or "himself" to refer to people who may not be men?

c. If you have mentioned someone's sex or gender, was it necessary to do so?

d. Do you use any occupational (or other) stereotypes?

e. Do you provide the same information and descriptions when writing about people of different genders?

2. Be willing to sit in the discomfort of your privilege pressing hard against the reality of oppression.

3. Show intentionality in whom you invite to speak, read, sing, and pray.

4. Allow the silent to have their own voice.

5. Pray for boldness to break the status quo.

6. Accept your responsibility, without assuming you have ALL the responsibility.

7. Normalize women's involvement at all levels.

8. Choose faith over fear

9. In church leadership, men occupy a position of default; women occupy a position of difference, so recognize you have blind spots.

10. Be aware of the patriarchal structures in your setting.

11. Be a GOOD partner

12. Use gender-inclusive language - As you review your writing and your communications, ask yourself the following questions:

a. Have you used "man" or "men" or words containing them to refer to people who may not be men?

b. Have you used "he," "him," "his," or "himself" to refer to people who may not be men?

c. If you have mentioned someone's sex or gender, was it necessary to do so?

d. Do you use any occupational (or other) stereotypes?

e. Do you provide the same kinds of information and descriptions when writing about people of different genders?

AME/WIM celebrates the increasing number of women in ministry in the AMEC; the diversities of ministries which they are performing; the appointment of women to the pastorate, and to

major charges; the number of women clergy holding Annual Conference offices such as Dean of the Board of Examiners and serving on the Board; membership on committees such as the Finance Committee; the inclusion of women as worship leaders, preachers and teachers at Conferences and Connectional meetings; the growing number of female Presiding Elders; the seating of women in the General Board; and the greater presence of women in the Episcopal District delegations to the General Conference. We were proud to support and participate in the herstoric elections of Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie (117) in 2000; Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry (122) and Bishop Sarah Frances Davis (126) in 2004; and Rev. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown as Historiographer/Executive Director, Department of Research and Scholarship in 2012.

Yet we recognize that our mission calls us to keep pressing to eliminate sexist and discriminatory practices and that we must continue to raise our voices until there is full equity and inclusion of women in ministry in the life, ministry, and leadership of the A.M.E. Church. To this end, AME/WIM calls for the 50th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference, during this commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the A.M.E. Church, to elect to the Episcopacy in 2016 female candidates who have demonstrated their call, aspiration, and qualifications to serve in the episcopacy.

Appendix E

Herstorical Timeline of Women In Ministry in the AME Church

(From State & Herstory of the AME Church-Presented to Dover District of the Delaware Annual Conference)

1787 Founding of the AME Church

1809 Jarena Lee denied licensed to preach

1817 / 1819 Jarena Lee licensed to preach

18?? Death of Jarena Lee

1848 Ordination of women comes before the General Conference for consideration in the form of a petition by the Daughters of Zion. The General Conference granted permission for women to preach in churches and receive licenses, but not ordination.

1852 Ordination of women comes before the General Conference for a second time, it is again rejected.

1856 Ordination of women comes before the General Conference for a third time, it is again rejected.

1868 Ordination of women comes before the General Conference for a fourth time, this leads to the creation of the office of Stewardess, female evangelist, and deaconess.

1884 Women were licensed to preach in the AME Church.

1885 Bishop Henry McNeal Turner ordained Sarah Hughes an itinerant deacon

1887 Ordination of women rescinded by Bishop Jabez P. Campbell

1888 The General Conference affirms Bishop Campbell's order to rescind the ordination of Sarah Hughes. Women are confirmed as Evangelist.

1936 Martha Jane Keys, a pastor and evangelist from Kentucky, initiated the legal challenge to women's exclusion from ordination introducing a bill at the General Conference calling for the ordination of women. The bill failed.

1948 The General Conference authorized the ordination of women as Local Deacons

1956 The General Conference authorized the ordination of women as Local Deacons

1960 The General Conference authorized the ordination of women as Itinerants

1964 Rev. Carrie Thomas Hooper of the New York Annual Conference becomes first female candidate for the Episcopacy

1968 Rev. Carrie Thomas Hooper runs for the Episcopacy for a second time

1972 Rev. Carrie Thomas Hooper runs for the Episcopacy for a third time.

1973 Bishop Frederick H. Talbot broke with the tradition of nearly two centuries when he appointed Reverend Dorothy Millicent Stephens Morris Acting Presiding Elder (16th Episcopal District)

1976 Rev. Carrie Thomas Hooper runs for the Episcopacy for a fourth time

1976 Rev. Jacquelyn Grant presents a position paper on Women in Ministry

1977 Ad Hoc WIM Committee established with Rev. Jacquelyn Grant as chair

1980 Rev. Carrie Thomas Hooper runs for the Episcopacy for a fifth time

1983 Bishop Vinton R. Anderson appointed Rev. Cornelia Wright Presiding Elder, making her the first female Presiding Elder in the United States.

1988 The Commission on African Methodist Episcopal Women In Ministry established

1992 The Commission on African Methodist Episcopal Women In Ministry admitted by the General Conference

1996 Rev. Carrie Thomas Hooper dies at the age of 102

1996 Recommendation to the General Conference to elect a female clergy to the Episcopacy

1996 Bishop C Garnett Henning encouraged the General Conference to revisit the AME Church motto, noting that its language was "un-inclusive"

2000 Dr. Jayme Coleman Williams, the first elected female General Officer, presented a Special Resolution in compliance with rule #15 in support of electing a female to the Episcopacy.

2000 Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie (117th) is elected the first female Bishop in the AME Church

2004 Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry (122nd) and Bishop Sarah Frances Davis (126th) elected Bishops in the AME Church

2012 Rev. Teresa Fry Brown, PhD, elected as Historiographer making her the first clergy woman to hold a General Office.

2012 Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry (122nd) retires.

2013 Bishop Sarah Frances Davis (126th) dies on November 9, 2013

2016 Bishop E. Anne Henning Byfield (135th) elected a Bishop in the AME Church

2016 General Conference passes resolution to confer on Jarena Lee, making her The Reverend Jarena Lee

2017 Presiding Elder Dorothy Millicent Morrison dies at the age of 103

Appendix F

Commission on Women In Ministry -Resolution on Women

(The follow resolution was presented to and adopted by The Commission on Women In Ministry)

WHEREAS, it is asked in Micah 6:8 "…what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?" We stand in solidarity with the Church, fully committed to the Quadrennial Theme "The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A Social Justice and Liberating Faith" and;

WHEREAS, justice is a human right that must encompass the indispensable right for persons to live and work in our churches, communities and countries with dignity and pride free from oppression; and

WHEREAS, our pursuit of justice should include an intentional commitment to gender justice, so that we might live in a world where everybody, women and men, boys and girls are equally valued and able to share equitably in the distribution of power, knowledge, resources, and access; and

WHEREAS, AME/WIM challenges the African Methodist Episcopal church to recognize that in addition to addressing Political Justice, Criminal Justice, Environmental Justice, and Economic

Justice, A Social Justice and Liberating Faith must also address Gender Justice, both in the world and in the church; and WHEREAS, it is our desire to see the sons and daughters of God, free from cultural, religious, institutional and interpersonal systems of privilege which have long oppressed persons through violence, imperceptions, oppression and repression based on gender; and

WHEREAS, as the adverse impact of gender injustice is primarily and most severely experienced by women and girls, who are discriminated against in the home, work place, community and church; and WHEREAS, it is imperative that we consciously and intentionally work for equitable and impartial treatment of all in accordance with the word of God which says to us God created them male and female, and God blessed them and called them "human" Genesis 5:2; and

WHEREAS, our Sister Communion, the United Methodist Church, having apologized to the AME Church for its injustice to people of color and desiring not to repeat a similar injustice to women has begun to address gender justice issues stating that: “reliability as an agency of God's love assumes that we are paying attention to one another and we are seeking to empower, to unshackle, to raise up those who are still oppressed, repressed, derided and treated as "less than”; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church is, still on the journey towards fully respecting and valuing the gifts and call of all persons; and

WHEREAS, we trust that the AME Church will: · Affirm the right of women to live free from violence and abuse, · Affirm the importance of women by placing them in key leadership decision-making positions at all levels of the Church, our institutions and society, · Urge our elected officials and government agencies to retain and enact legislation and policies that protect women against all forms of violence, economic injustice and discrimination, · Eliminate gender-role stereotypes in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the Church and society, · Affirm the right of women to equal treatment through employment, promotions, economic parity and justice.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that AME/WIM comes before you, "Standing United, Moving Forward, Stronger Together;" in support of human rights and asks The Commission on Women In Ministry to request of the General Board the following:

1. The adoption of this policy/statement regarding the equality and the value of women:

We, The African Methodist Episcopal Church, affirm that all men and women are created equal by God and therefore, entitled to value of personhood, parity in employment, equal distribution of responsibility and promotion in ministry.

We the African Methodist Episcopal Church will work to eliminate gender-role stereotypes and discrimination in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the Church and society.

We will champion economic parity and justice by affirming the right of women to equal treatment and placement in key leadership decision-making positions at all levels of our Church, our Institutions, and our communities.

2. That the General Board urge our elected officials and government agencies to retain and enact legislation and policies that protect women against all forms of misogyny, violence, and discrimination.

3. That the General Board recognize March as International Women's History Month and strongly encourage local churches to recognize and celebrate the work of women in our Zion.

Appendix G

IRB Research Protocol

New York Theological Seminary
Institutional Review Board Application—
Research Protocol

1. List your name, contact information, and the name of the institution, course, or project to which your research is related. List the names and contact information for your faculty advisors to this project (or note for faculty designed classroom assignments or faculty research, n/a).

Principal Investigator
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2. Explain the nature and purpose of this research. What do you hope to learn and why?

To present evidence from thirteen female subjects and statistical data regarding the normalization of patriarchy, misogyny, discrimination, and sexism in the African Methodist Episcopal Church towards female preachers. The research will indicate that female preachers who have matriculated through the church and obtained coveted positions and appointments experienced (and in some instances are still experiencing) some of the deeply institutionalized patriarchy amongst both genders. In order for the denomination to survive and thrive there needs to be a reconstitution of the culture that has affirmed patriarchy.

3. Describe your research methods and procedures.
Be specific. Indicate the length of time involved and the place where you plan to conduct interviews or observation. Explain how you will select or recruit participants, and how you plan to make and keep records for your research. Specify your intentions for the use of visual records, such as photographs and videotapes.

Each participant that was chosen represents various positions in the African Methodist Episcopal Church; five generations and eight of the thirteen inland Episcopal Districts of the denomination.

Each preacher was emailed the same twenty-question survey

Upon completion of the survey, each participant was scheduled for a 1-hour Zoom video conference interview to expound upon the closed-ended responses and to provide other additional data or information. Of the thirteen, twelve conducted the video interview and one interview was conducted by phone.

After all, thirteen participants have been interviewed, a final Zoom video conference call with the entire group was scheduled. Nine of the thirteen participants attended this final video conference call.

Recorded video responses are being stored in the Cloud and two interviews are being stored on a password-protected laptop. Full video interviews will not be included in the final project. Usage of partial video clips is possible.

4. Attach a copy of all survey instruments or a list of the questions that you intend to ask potential participants. If these questions are not completely settled, submit your tentative plans.

See Attached

5. Describe your relationship to the potential participants. Are you their pastor, chaplain, teacher, friend or other?

The Interviewer has ministerial relationships with the candidates who serve in the same denomination as the Interviewer.

6. Discuss any potential benefits you envision for the participants in your study. What is the good that you hope will result from this study? What benefits, if any, will accrue to the participants?

By participating in this study, the Interviewer hopes that each woman in ministry has the determination to mentor and advise other women in ministry on navigating the patriarchal terrain in our denomination; and that women in ministry currently serving in the church will present concrete data to the hierarchy in their respective Episcopal Districts that would illuminate the issues that need to be addressed.

7. Discuss any potential risks to the participants in your study.

Are any of your participants members of vulnerable groups (such as children, persons with stigmatizing illnesses, whistleblowers, prisoners, persons with physically or mentally disabling conditions, etc.)? Explain the measures you will take to provide for their privacy. Explain how you will respond if a participant has adverse effects as a result of your study.

The participants could be ostracized and blackballed for participation and their responses. The participants could be recipients of weaponization of the Episcopal authority. The participants gave me permission to record their responses. I insured privacy in instances where it was requested for me to stop the recording so that the participant could speak freely.

8. Explain the policies and procedures that you will use to insure the confidentiality and or anonymity of your participants.

Will you use pseudonyms or a numerical coding system? Are there any factors other than names that might identify your research subjects? If so, what will you do to ensure anonymity? How will your data be stored? How long will the data be kept?

General descriptive terms will be used for this study. While participants permitted me to use their names, two hesitantly gave consent. So as to be consistent, the previously noted forms of identity will be utilized. While demographic information will be gathered from respondents, personal information such as addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, etc. will not be identifiable. Because most of the participants are well known in the denomination and many outside of the denomination, they are public figures, so their places of employment and where they serve are included in their biographies. Data will be stored on a password-protected laptop, password protected Google drive, and iCloud. Upon completion of the dissertation, the data will be kept for at least five years for utilization in future projects.

9. Include a copy of any consent forms that you are planning to use. The language used on these forms should be clear, simple, and straightforward, not laden with technical jargon.

See below.

10.What will happen to the final report of your research? Do you plan to share the summary with the class, community, or congregation? What form will this representation take, and what media will you use? List any possible venues in which you might publish this work now or in the future.

The final report will be presented to the participants and individuals in the denomination during presentations to Connection and Episcopal District Women In Ministry gatherings. Publication is being considered. If publication takes place, it will be in book form through a publishing house.

Appendix H

IRB Interview Protocol

New York Theological Seminary Informed Consent Form

Introduction

My name is Sharon Moore and I'm a student at New York Theological Seminary conducting research for my dissertation. My phone number is 313-354-1176. My email address is revsmoore8@gmail.com.

My research supervisor is Rev. Dr. Jessica K. Ingram. Her phone number is 313-806-8180. Her email address is *journeyministry@aol.com*.

(Feel free to contact either of us at any time if you have questions about this study.)

Purpose

To present evidence from thirteen female subjects and statistical data regarding the normalization of patriarchy, misogyny, discrimination, and sexism in the African Methodist Episcopal Church towards female preachers. The research will indicate that female preachers who have matriculated through the church and obtained coveted positions and appointments experienced (and in some instances are still experiencing) some of the deeply institutionalized patriarchy amongst both genders. In order for the denomination to survive and thrive there needs to be a reconstitution of the culture that has affirmed patriarchy.

Procedure

If you consent to participating in this study, there will be 3 parts of commitment for you. (1) You will be asked to participate in a brief 20-question survey that contains 18 closed-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions. (2) After completion of the survey, I will request a one-on-one Zoom interview with each participant. (3) After the one-on-one Zoom interview, the final stage will be a culmination Zoom call with all participants.

Time Required

The survey time will vary for each participant. However, 1 hour for each Zoom interview is requested.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still decline to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You are completely free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Risks

I anticipate no known risks associated with this study. In any human subject research involving self-disclosure, there is always the possibility that you may feel discomfort or distress in the course of the research. If this happens, please inform me immediately.

Benefits

While there are no guaranteed benefits, it is possible that you may enjoy participating in this research and/or sharing your responses to research questions, or that you will find the project personally or spiritually meaningful.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

Because the purpose of this project is to expose the deeply entrenched patriarchy that is not only relegated to women who are not occupying well known leadership positions, but even 'successful' women have had to endure this culture of discrimination, it is important for the participant's names to be

utilized, but consent will be sought for the use and careful consideration will be given to the way that responses are disclosed in the project.

Importance of Candor

It is essential to this kind of research that all responses from participants be open, candid, forthright, and honest.

Sharing the Results

Results of research may be shared through class presentation, in written form, or in other ways. There is the possibility that I may publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future.

Before You Sign

By signing below, you are agreeing to participate in this project with the possibility of your words being written in a final paper. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your full satisfaction before signing this document. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you. Separate copies will be kept in a sealed envelope in a locked file cabinet in the New York Theological Seminary Dean's office and by the researcher.

Print Participant's Name:

_____

Participant's Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: Sharon D. Moore

Researcher's Signature: _*Sharon D. Moore*_____

Date: __January 2024_____

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